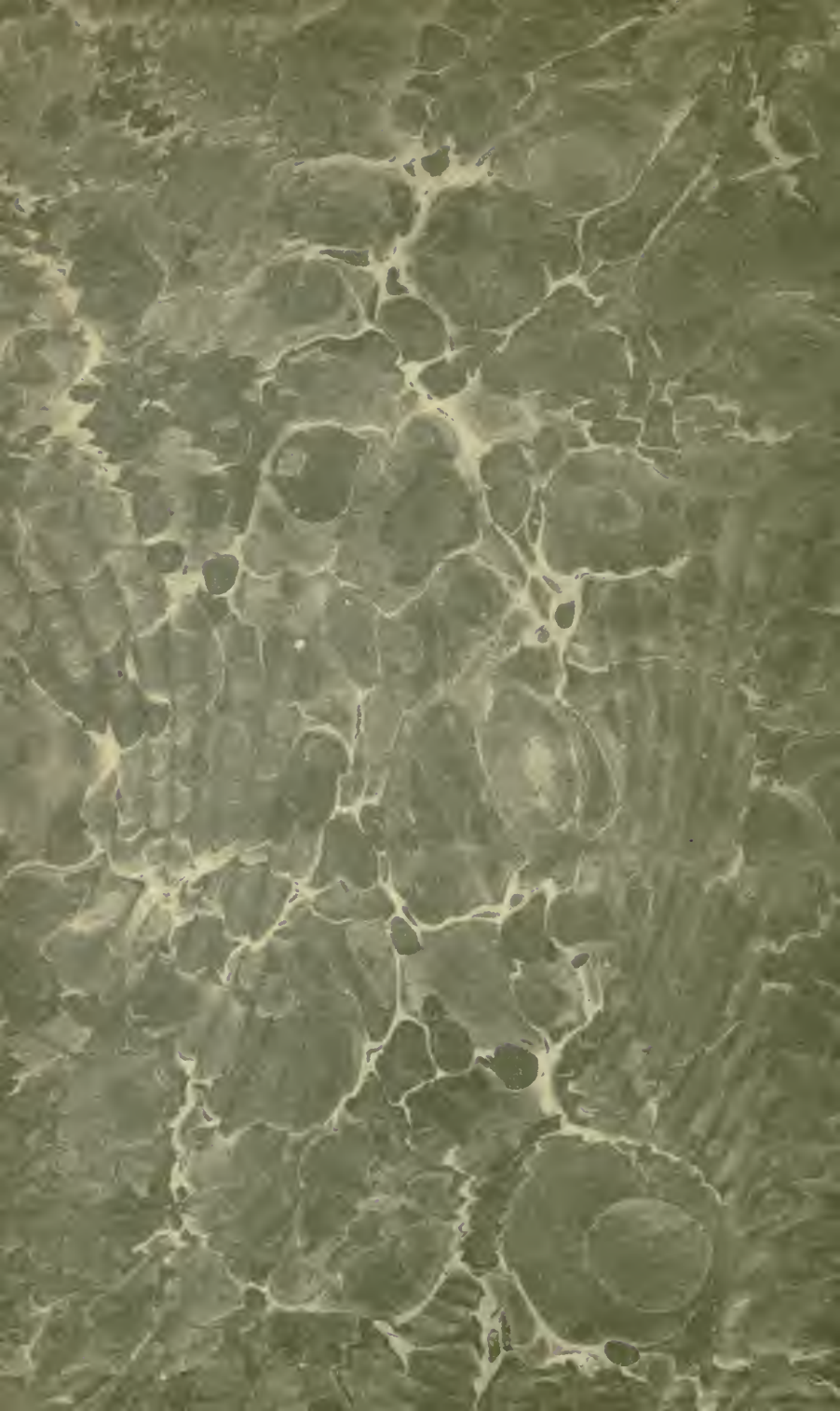


*In an Unknown  
Prison Land*

GEORGE GRIFFIN







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*Frontispiece.]*

# IN AN UNKNOWN • PRISON LAND

AN ACCOUNT OF CONVICTS AND  
COLONISTS IN NEW CALEDONIA  
WITH JOTTINGS OUT AND HOME

BY

GEORGE GRIFFITH

AUTHOR OF "MEN WHO HAVE MADE THE  
EMPIRE," "THE VIRGIN OF THE SUN,"  
A TALE OF THE CONQUEST OF PERU,  
"BRITON OR BOER?" A STORY OF THE  
• FIGHT FOR AFRICA, ETC., ETC. •

WITH A PORTRAIT AND NUMEROUS  
• ILLUSTRATIONS •

London : HUTCHINSON & CO  
Paternoster Row  1901

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HAZELL, WATSON, AND VINEY, LD.  
LONDON AND AYLESBURY

To  
THE EARL OF DUNMORE  
WHOSE KINDNESS AND HOSPITALITY MADE MY  
SOJOURN IN PRISON-LAND MUCH MORE  
PLEASANT THAN IT MIGHT  
HAVE BEEN.

2020050





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## NOTE

The last sentence on p. 137 should read :

“The Cachots Noirs were never opened except at stated intervals,—once every morning for inspection, and once every thirty days for exercise and a medical examination of the prisoner.” I am glad to be able to state on the authority of the Minister of Colonies that this terrible punishment has now been made much less severe. Every seventh day the prisoner is placed for a day in a light cell ; he is also given an hour’s exercise every day ; and the maximum sentence has been reduced to two years, subject to the medical veto. In the text I have described what I saw ; but this atrocity is now, happily, a thing of the past.—G. G.





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Part I

*A STREAK THROUGH THE STATES*



# I

## *DUTIES AND DOLLARS*

IT was on the fifth night out from Southampton that the threatening shadow of the American Custom House began to fall over the company in the saloon.

One could see ladies talking nervously together. The subject was the one most dear to the female heart; but the pleasure of talking about "things" was mingled—at least in the hearts of the uninitiated—with an uneasiness which, in not a few cases, amounted to actual fear; for that evening certain forms had been distributed by the purser, and these forms contained questions calculated to search out the inmost secret of every dress-basket and Saratoga trunk on board.

By the time you had filled in the blanks, if you had done it honestly—as, of course, no one except myself did—you had not only given a detailed list of your wardrobe, but you had



enumerated in a separate schedule every article that you had bought new in Europe.

You were graciously permitted to possess one hundred dollars', or, say, twenty pounds' worth of personal effects. If you had more than that you were treated as a commercial traveller importing dry goods, and had to pay duty in case you sold them again, and thus came into competition with the infant industries of Uncle Sam.

At the foot of the schedule was a solemn declaration that you had given your wardrobe away to the last pocket-handkerchief, and the next day you had to repeat this declaration verbally to an urbane official, who was polite enough to look as though he believed you.

When it came to the actual examination in the wharf-shed, I found myself wondering where Uncle Sam's practical commonsense came in. You had to take a paper, given to you on board in exchange for your declaration, to a desk at which sat a single clerk.

As there were about four hundred first- and second-class passengers, this took some little time, and provoked considerable language. When you

had at length struggled to the desk the clerk gave you a ticket, beckoned to a gentleman in uniform, handed him your paper, and remarked :

“Here, George, see to this.”

In my case George seemed to have a pressing engagement somewhere else, for he went off and I never set eyes on him again. My modest effects, a steamer trunk, a Gladstone-bag, and a camera-case, lay frankly open to the gaze of all men in cold neglect, while small mountains of trunks were opened, their contents tickled superficially by the lenient fingers of the examiners, closed again, and carted off.

A couple of hours later, when I had interviewed every official in the shed on the subject of the missing George, and made a general nuisance of myself, I was requested to take my things out and not worry—or words to that effect. Outside I met a fellow-voyager, who informed me that he and his wife had taken thirteen trunks full of dutiable stuff through without paying a cent of duty—at least not to the Exchequer of the United States Customs.

He had been through before and knew his man. It may have cost him ten dollars, but Uncle Sam

would have wanted three or four hundred ; wherefore it is a good thing to know your man when you land at New York with a wife and a two years' wardrobe.

From this it will be seen that there was none of that turning out of trunks and shameless, heartless exhibition of things that should only be seen in shop windows before they are bought, which one heard so much about a few years ago. That is practically stopped now, and it was stopped by the officials themselves.

They didn't scatter precious if unmentionable garments around the shed floor out of pure devilry or levity of soul. The American official is like any other ; he wants to earn his salary as easily as possible, and the new tariff regulations gave him a tremendous lot of work, so he took counsel with himself and came to the astute conclusion that if he systematically outraged the tenderest sentiments of the wives and daughters of millionaires, senators, congressmen, political bosses, and other American sovereigns for a certain period either the regulations would have to be considerably watered down or there would be another civil war.

His conclusions were perfectly correct. The big

customs officials faced the music stubbornly for a time ; then invitations to dinner and the most select social functions began to fall off. Their wives and daughters lost many opportunities of showing off the pretty frocks which they had smuggled in from Europe.

Election time came near—in other words, Judgment Day for every American official from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was openly hinted in high places that the authors of such outrages on America's proudest matrons and most dainty maidens were soulless brutes who weren't fit to hold office, and then the United States Customs Department came down on its knees, kissed the hems of the garments it had scattered around the shed floor, and, as usual, the Eternal Feminine had conquered.

In Paul Leicester Ford's delightful word-picture of American political life, "The Honourable Peter Sterling," the worthy Peter delivers a dinner-table homily on the immorality of five hundred first-class steamboat passengers conspiring to defraud the revenue of their native land by means of false declarations such as most of us signed on the *St. Louis*.

I was surprised to find that Peter, a shrewd politician and successful ward-boss, knew so little of human nature.

Never from now till the dawn of the millennium abolishes the last Customs House will men and women be convinced that it is immoral or even wrong to smuggle. It is simply a game between the travellers and the officials. If they are caught they pay. If not the man smokes his cigars with an added gusto, and the woman finds a new delight in wearing a dainty costume which all the arts of all the Worths and all the Redferns on earth could never give her—and of such were the voyagers on the *St. Louis*. \*

Before I got to bed that night I had come to the conclusion that no country was ever better described in a single phrase than America was by poor G. W. Steevens when he called it the Land of the Dollar.

From the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from Maine

\* Since my return, I find that there has been a recrudescence of this fiscal foolishness in New York with an addition of personal persecution. By the time these pages are in my readers' hands the autocrats of the inquisition will probably have heard something drop. To bully the American Woman is too large an order even for the Great Republic.



to Mexico, you simply can't get away from it. In other countries people talk about money,—generally and incidentally about pounds, or francs, or marks, or pesetas,—but in America it is dollars first, last, and all the time.

Where an Englishman would say a man was keen on making money, an American would say "he's out for dollars." On this side we speak of making a fortune, over there it's "making a pile,"—of dollars understood,—and so on.

But there is another sense in which the pungent phrase is true. I am not going to commit myself to the assertion that everything in the States is a dollar, because there are many things which cost more than a dollar. There are also some—a few—which cost less, such as newspapers and tramcar tickets, but, as a rule, when you put your hand into your pocket a dollar comes out—often several—and you don't have much change.

Thus, when I had released my baggage from the lax grip of the United States Customs, I took a carriage ticket at the desk. Three dollars. In London the fare from the station to the hotel would have been about half a crown. The gentleman who put my luggage up received a quarter. If I had

offered him less he would probably have declined it and asked me, with scathing irony, to come and have a drink at his expense.

Still, that carriage was a carriage, and not a cab ; well-hung, well-cushioned, and well-horsed. In fact, I was not many hours in New York before I began to see that, although you pay, you get. Everything from a banquet to a boot-shine is done in better style than it is in England.

"We are very full, sir," said the clerk at the Murray Hill Hotel ; "but I can give you a four-dollar room. I daresay you'll like a comfortable night after your passage."

I thought sixteen shillings and eightpence a good deal for a room, but I found that the room was really a suite, a big bed-sitting-room, beautifully furnished, with bathroom, lavatory, and clothes-cupboard attached.

The next morning I had a shine which cost five-pence, but that shine lasted all the way to San Francisco. The boots simply needed dusting and they were as bright as ever. Then I went and had a shilling shave, and found that the American shave is to the English one as a Turkish bath is to a cold tub ; and so on throughout. You spend

more money, far more, than in England, but you get a great deal more for it. But to this rule there is one great and glorious exception, and that is railway travelling.

I presented my ordinary first-class tickets at the booking-office in the Central Dépôt, and then came from the lips of the keen-faced, but most polite and obliging clerk, the inevitable "five dollars please—and if you're going on the South-Western Limited it will be one dollar more. You see this is one of the fastest trains in the world, and we keep it select. You'll have a section to yourself all the way."

I checked my trunk in the baggage-office and said a thankful good-bye to it for three thousand two hundred miles, after buying a new strap for it, which, curiously enough, was not a dollar, but seventy-five cents. Then I took possession of my cosy corner in the long, luxuriously furnished car to be whirled over a thousand miles of iron road in twenty-three hours and a half.

Soon after we had pulled out of New York and the bogey wheels had begun the deep-voiced hum which was to last day and night for the inside of a week, I saw something which struck me again

and again in the run across the continent. A big American city is like a robe of cloth of gold with a frayed and tattered border of dirty cotton. Its outskirts are unutterably ragged and squalid.

A few minutes after you leave the splendid streets and squares of Central New York you are running through a region of mean and forlorn-looking wooden huts—really, they can hardly be called houses—crowded up together in terraces or blocks beside broad, unpaved roads, which may some day be streets, or standing in little lots of their own, scraps of unkempt land, too small for fields, and as much like gardens as a dumping-ground for London rubbish. All the houses wanted painting, and most of them repairing. The whole aspect was one of squalid poverty and mean discomfort.

But these soon fell behind the flying wheels of the South-Western Limited. Another region was entered, a region of stately pleasure-houses standing amidst broad, well-wooded lands, and presently the great train swept with a stately swing round a sloping curve, and then began one of the loveliest railway runs in the world, the seventy-mile-an-hour spin along the level, four-track road

which lies beside the eastern bank of the broad and beautiful Hudson.

It was during this delicious spin that I went into the smoking-room to have a pipe and something else. I sat down in a seat opposite to a man whose appearance stamped him as one of those quietly prosperous Americans who just go to their work and do it with such splendid thoroughness that the doing of it saves their country from falling into the social and political chaos that some other Americans would make of it if they could.

He gave me a light, and we began talking. If it had been in an English train we might have glared at each other for five hundred miles without a word. As it was, we had begun to know each other in half an hour. We talked about the Hudson, and the Catskills, and West Point, and then about the train, and so the talk came back to the inevitable dollar.

"A gorgeous train this," I said ; "far and away beyond anything we have in England. But," I added with uncalculating haste, "it seems to me pretty expensive."

"Excuse me," he said, "I don't think you've



figured it out. You're going to San Francisco, thirty-two hundred miles from here. All the way you have a comfortable train,"—that was his lordly way of putting it,—“you have servants to wait on you day and night, a barber to shave you, a stenographer to dictate your letters to, and you never need get off the train except for the change at Chicago.

“When you get to San Francisco you will find that the total cost works out at about three cents a mile, say three halfpence. I believe the legal first-class fare in England—without sleeping-accommodation, in fact without anything you have here except a place to sit down in—is threepence a mile.”

I didn't make the calculation, because when we subsequently exchanged cards I found I was talking to the President of the Mercantile Transportation Company, a man who knows just about as much of travel by land and sea as there is to be learnt.

After this we got on to railroading generally. I learnt much, and in the learning thereof came to think even less of British railway methods than I had done before. I learnt why it was

cheaper to carry grain a thousand miles from Chicago to New York than it is to carry it a couple of hundred miles from Yorkshire to London ; why cattle can be carried over thousands of miles of prairie at less cost than over hundreds of miles of English railroads ; and many other things all bearing on the question of the dollar and how to save it—for your true American is just as keen on saving as he is lavish in spending—which I thought might well be taught and still better learnt on this side.

It was during this conversation that I had an example of that absolutely disinterested kindness with which the wanderer so often meets in America and so seldom in England.

“By the way,” said Mr. President, “have you taken your berth from Chicago in the Overland Limited ? ”

“No,” I said ; “I was told I could telegraph for it from Buffalo.”

“Well,” he said, “you know the train is limited and will probably be pretty full. There’s quite a number of people going west just now. However, don’t trouble ; I guess I can fix that for you.”

Now, I had never seen this man before, and the probability was that I should never meet him again, and yet when I got to the North-Western Depôt at Chicago there was a section in the centre of one of the newest and most luxurious cars reserved for me.

"Mr. Griffith?" said the clerk, as I presented my transportation tickets. "That's all right, sir. Your section's engaged. Here's your check, '2 D, San Vincente.' Got a porter? Well, you can have your baggage taken down right away. She pulls out 3.30 sharp. Seventeen dollars, please."



## II

### *CONCERNING CITIES, WITH A PARENTHESIS ON MANNERS*

I HAVE seen cities in many parts of the world, from the smoke-grimed, flame-crowned, cloud-canopied hives of industry of middle and Northern England, of Belgium, and Northern France, to the marble palaces and broad-verandahed bungalows which sleep among the palm-groves by the white shores of tropic seas ; but never—north, south, east, or west—have I seen a collection of human habitations and workshops so utterly hopeless, so irretrievably ugly as that portion of Chicago about which I wandered during my three hours' wait for the starting of the Overland Limited.

The roadways—really one cannot call them streets—would of themselves have been far inferior to similar streets in Manchester or Wolverhampton, because here at least the streets are paved. In Chicago they are not.

Many years ago an attempt seems to have been made to pave them, but the stones have sunk, and the mud and slush have come up, and every variety of filth covers them except about the lines over which the tramcars rush, hissing and clanging on their headlong way. But the roadways of Chicago are also tunnels, for over them stretches the solid, continuous iron arch of the overhead railway whence come the roar of wheels, the snorting of steam-engines, the shriek of whistles, and the wailing groan of the brakes.

Now and then you reach a crossing or open place where you emerge from the tunnel, out of semi-darkness into comparative light, and you see vast shapes of stiff-angled, steep-roofed buildings lifting their sixteenth or seventeenth storey up into the murky, smoke-laden sky. They are part and parcel of Chicago—huge, ugly, dirty, and exceedingly useful.

There are big buildings in New York, but they are to the Chicago buildings as palaces compared to factories. There are others in San Francisco which are merely eccentricities and not altogether unpicturesque, but the Chicago sky-scraper is a sort of architectural fungus, an insulting excrescence

from the unoffending earth, which makes you long to get big guns and shoot at it. Still, it is useful, and serves the purpose for which it was built, and that is why Chicago is not only content with it, but even proud of it.

Believing many things that were said to me afterwards, I doubt not that Chicago, elsewhere and other than I saw it, is one of the finest and most beautiful cities on earth. Far be it from me to believe otherwise, since some day I hope to see it again; and he who thinks ill of Chicago will have about as good a time there as a man who thinks well of New York.

Still, common honesty obliges me to say that the impression which I took away with me in the Overland Limited was one of vastness, uncleanness, and ugliness, redeemed only by that sombre, Plutonic magnificence which seems to be the one reward of an absolute and unhesitating sacrifice to blank utility.

And yet I did find one view in Chicago which qualified this, and that was from the western end of the Lake Front. The ragged steamboat piers, the long rows of posts marking the shoals, the piles of the groynes, one or two dilapidated and almost

prehistoric steamboats, and blistered, out-of-date yachts laid up along the lake wall, the stately sweep of houses, the huge bulks of the factories in the east, with their towering chimneys pouring out clouds of smoke and steam—these, with the smooth water of the horizonless lake, made a pleasanter mental photograph to take away with one than the unlovely roaring streets and the hideous wealth-crammed stores and warehouses.

From Chicago to Ogden the route of the Union Pacific is about as uninteresting as the central section of the Canadian Pacific, only here the towns and villages are more frequent and the country is naturally far more advanced in cultivation.

Cities, of course, are numerous. They vary in size from two to fifty thousand inhabitants; but structurally they are all the same—tin-roofed houses of weather-board, banks and offices, stores and factories, and elevators of brick ranged along wide and mostly unpaved roads with plank side-walks.

No apparent attempt has been made at order or uniformity. Where a big building is wanted there it is put, and where a little wooden shanty serves its purpose there it remains.

There is plenty of elbow-room, and so the village

spreads itself into the city in a quite promiscuous fashion, something like a boy left to grow up into a man according to his own sweet will. But be it well noted that he becomes a man all the same, for every one of these cities, big or small, wood or brick, or both, was teeming with life and humming with business.

One of the many visible signs of this could be seen in the number of telegraph-wires slung on huge unsightly poles running up both sides of the unkempt streets ; in fact, an American inland city of five thousand inhabitants seems to do a good deal more telegraphing and telephoning than an English town of fifty thousand.

One other feature of the villages, towns, and "cities" along the route struck me rather forcibly. Nearly all of them, big and little, have very fine stations—I beg pardon, depôts. In fact, the practice seems to be to build a fine, big depôt and let the city grow up to it. Thus, for instance, at Omaha City, where we had a half-hour's wait changing horses and looking out for hot boxes, I found the depôt built of grey granite, floored with marble, and entered by two splendid twin staircases curving down through a domed and pillared hall

to spacious waiting-rooms and offices opening on to a platform about a quarter of a mile long.

It was the sort of station you would expect to find in a go-ahead English or European city that possessed streets and squares and houses to match. Now Omaha is go-ahead, and big, and busy, but for all you can see of it from the train and station it is scattered promiscuously around hill and dale, and the palatial station itself stands in the midst of a waste of sloppy roads traversed as usual by the hurrying electric trams, and bordered by little, shabby, ill-assorted wooden houses which don't look worth fifty pounds apiece. For all that, Omaha is one of the busiest and wealthiest cities of the Middle States.

At Ogden, where the iron roads from every part of the continent seem to meet, and where big, high-shouldered engines from Mexico and Texas whistled their greetings to brother monsters from Maine and California, I felt sorely tempted to stop off and take the thirty-mile run to Salt Lake City, but

"The steamer won't wait for the train,"

and I should have risked missing my boat to Honolulu—added to which I had made some



friends on the train who were going to show me round San Francisco in case I had a day or so there, so I read my Kipling instead, and saw the Mormon city with keener eyes than mine.

By the way, American manners appear to have altered very much for the better since Kipling made his journey "From Sea to Sea." I traversed a good deal of the same ground, and stayed at some of the same hotels that he did, but I never met with more straight-spoken, dignified courtesy in any part of the world.

I never saw hotel clerks who blazed with diamonds, or who treated me like a worm. As a matter of fact I never met more polite, obliging, well-informed men in any similar position. Certainly they could give many points to hotel managers and clerks in England and Australia.

The waiters, too, both white and black, must have vastly improved. The white waiter in America, as I found him, is quite the smartest, most intelligent, and, in his own manly way, the most polite of his class—a class very well typified by the bugler of the *St. Louis*. His coloured *confrère* does his work deftly, silently, and well.

Kipling relates a conversation which took place

in the Palace Hotel between a coloured waiter and himself, in which George—every servant in America whose name you don't know is George—made the remark :

“Oh —— ! Wages like that wouldn't keep me in cigars !”

I stayed at the Palace in San Francisco, and from what I heard and saw I should say that a waiter who made a remark like that nowadays would very soon find that cigars were an unattainable luxury to a man out of work. He would be “fired” on the spot.

My own experience certainly is, that the Americans are the politest people on earth, or, perhaps I ought to say, the most courteous, because any one can be polite if it pays him. Only a gentleman can be courteous. They have learnt, apparently at the hands of Mother Nature herself, that subtle blending of politeness and dignity which we call courtesy.

For instance, an American waiter, or barber, or shoeblack says “Sir” quite differently to anybody else in the world, except perhaps the American gentleman who may be worth his millions. There is no suspicion of cringing or inferiority about



it, whether it comes from the shoeblack or the millionaire. It seems to say equally from the one as from the other "our circumstances may be different, but we are both of us gentlemen in our way, and so we will behave to each other as gentlemen," and politeness of that sort is the pleasantest of all politeness.

Now, in Australia—but Australia is still seven thousand miles away across the broad Pacific, so we will talk about that later on. Meanwhile a couple of iron giants have been harnessed to the long line of palace-cars, the mails have been exchanged from train to train, the bells begin to swing and clang out soft musical warning notes, the mellow whistles sing good-bye from engine to engine; "all aboard" is the word, and the Overland Limited threads its way through the maze of shining metals, and heads away westward to where a long, gleaming line of silver backed by a black screen of mountains tipped with diamonds shows the position of the Inland Sea of the Wilderness.

Salt Lake, the Dead Sea of the Mormon Land of Promise, is smaller now by a good many scores of square miles than it was some thirty years ago,

when the Southern Pacific was connected up with the Union Pacific, and so completed the iron chain which links the Hudson with the Sacramento.

For three or four hours the train runs over embankments surrounded by vast salt mud-flats, which in those days were covered by the fast-shrinking waters. It is the old story, the story of nearly all these upland desert regions. Every year less rain falls in the valleys and less snow on the mountains. As the clouds grow thinner and fewer the sun blazes hotter and sucks up more and more vapour, and so year by year the waters of the Great Salt Lake are getting less great and more salt.

With all due deference to American susceptibility on such points, I must say that the scenery of the Rockies which one sees from the windows of a car on the Union Pacific does not begin to compare with the scenery along the Canadian Pacific line. Even Echo Cañon and Weber Cañon, the show places of the line, struck me as comparatively insignificant when I remembered the splendours of Eagle Pass and the grandeurs of Bear Cañon.

But when the wilderness of Nevada had been cast behind our flying wheels, and we began to

climb up the wooded foothills of the Sierra Nevada—that snow-crowned mountain wall which divides one of the dreariest from one of the most beautiful regions on earth, the Great American Desert from “God’s own country”—it was time to sit up and use both your eyes and do your best to look out at both sides of the car at once.

It was here that the last and most beautiful stretch of the thirty-two-hundred-mile run began. Up the straight grades and round and round the twice and thrice-tiered loops the great train twined and circled; now skirting the shore of a still, pine-fringed lake, filling the bottom of a mountain valley; and now burrowing under the long snow-sheds, groaning under their weight of snow far away up the mountain-side, and so, mile by mile of distance, and yard by yard of height, the top of the Great Divide was reached.

The iron horses took a rest and a long drink at Alta, the summit station, and then,

“Down the valley with our guttering breaks a-squeal,”

we started on our way to that lovely land which lies between the mountains and the sea.

The snow vanished; first from the sides of

the track, and then from the gullies between the hills round which we twined. The mist-clouds rolled away behind us up the wooded slopes. The snow-peaks far beyond gleamed out above them, and ahead and below the dropping sun shone on a land of broken red hills, and, beyond them, over a vast level stretch of green grass and fruit-land, with a broad river flowing through it.

Beyond this again it glimmered far and faintly on a long streak of flickering silver. The red hills were the native land of Truthful James ; the green plains below were the Valley of the Sacramento ; and the shimmering silver in the far distance was the Pacific Ocean, whose character I propose hereafter to revise.

Then we rushed down through the last cañon out on to an open slope, and pulled up at Red Gulch. That is not its name on the time-tables, but it ought to be.

A freight truck had got off the line about two miles lower down. So, instead of a stop of ten minutes, we had to wait two hours, which I thankfully employed in making a little excursion through Bret Harte Land, the land of red earth and yellow gold, of towering pines and flower-

filled valleys, of deliciously mingled beauty and ugliness ; where the skies are as blue as they are above the Isles of the South, and the air seems like what one would expect to breathe in Paradise.

Climbing down from the car was like getting out of the world of reality, as represented by the Overland Limited (which, remember, had brought me from Chicago) into the Garden of Romance. I had left the comfortable but emphatically materialistic gorgeousness of the Pulman Palace-car, and I was actually standing on the same earth that Jack Hamlyn had trodden, and I was breathing the same air that he had inspired when he sang that famous song.

All around I could see gashes of red amid the green and brown of the slopes along the river banks—just such gulches as the one Tennessee lived in with his immortal partner. Somewhere up in the dark valleys through which the Overland Limited had just thundered the Outcasts of Poker Flat had found their last refuge, and John Oakhurst, after pinning that inscribed Deuce of Spades to the pine-tree with his bowie-knife, had passed in his checks like a gambler and a gentleman.

In just such a little schoolhouse as stood near



the depôt, Mliss had flung down her astronomy book and paralysed one part of her audience and ecstasied the other by that famous heresy of hers re the Miracle of Joshua.

"It's a damned lie. I don't believe a word of it."

Down yonder, in the lowlands across the river, not very far from its junction with a tributary, might have been North Fork and Poverty Flat; and just such a red hole as I found a hundred yards or so from the track might have been the forty-foot grave into which Dow descended "with a deringer hid in his breast," making his last despairing search for water—and finding gold.

The clang of the bell and the soft "hoo-too" of the whistle called me back out of my dream as I was having a drink at just such a bar as the gallant Colonel Starbottle might have slaked his immortal thirst at. A few moments more and the tireless wheels had begun to revolve again, and we slid down the curving slopes leading to the broad vale of the Sacramento.

On the way to the Golden Land I had fallen into conversation with a young Californian, a fine specimen of the Western race, of whom his



Two Snapshots up and down the Rio Sacramento, taken as the train was crossing the bridge.





country might well be proud, as he was proud of it.

"It's God's own country, sir. And when you've seen more of it you'll think so," he said, as we swept across the fat, fertile farmlands which lay beneath the foot-hills. "You've travelled a bit, you tell me ; but I guess if you go from end to end of this country you'll say you never struck one like it."

"Well," I said, "I sha'n't see much of it this time, I'm afraid ; but if I ever do get the chance of seeing it right through I'll tell you whether I think it's better than England."

"Yes," he replied reflectively, "I've an uncle who went to England, and he came back, right to home here, and said it was the most beautiful place God had ever made—but then, you see, it was new to him. He hadn't been over there before."

I thought that this wasn't a bad place to change the subject, so I asked him to have a drink, and switched off on to purely local topics. We crossed the big bridge over the Sacramento river, stopped a few minutes in Sacramento City, and then rolled on to Porta Costa station.

I have heard people say that they have gone from

New York to San Francisco by rail. This is one of those sayings which are wanting in certain qualifications of fact to make them unimpeachable. It is nearly true, but not quite.

The train, weighing I am afraid to say how many tons, ran into Porta Costa, which is a sort of detachable depôt on the estuary of the Sacramento river. When it stopped I got out of the car to have a look round. There was a "local" and a freight train lying alongside of us. There was also a vast superstructure running over the station, and in these I noticed two huge engine-beams slowly swinging.

Shortly after this I became aware of the fact that this piece of the depôt had gone adrift, and was, calmly and without any perceptible motion, carrying our train and the two others across the river to the depôt on the Oakland side.

I had been four and a half days in America and so I didn't feel surprised. All the same, it was sufficiently wonderful for admiration even there. I climbed back into the car and enjoyed the sensation of travelling by rail and sea at the same time, and then I got out again to see how the thing was done.

The piece of the Porta Costa station on which we

were floating steered into another station. The rails on the steam-driven platform were fitted on to other rails on *terra firma* ; the engine-bell clanged ; the whistle tooted in its soft, melodious way ; and the Overland Limited steamed from sea to land in the most commonplace fashion possible.

The next stop was at Oakland, on the eastern shore of the bay. Opposite glittered the lights of the Golden City. Here we detrained, and, having crossed on the biggest ferry in the world, we embarked on the biggest ferry-boat in the world—California, like the rest of the States, is great on big things—and an hour or so later I found myself installed at the Palace Hotel, which is also believed by all good Californians to be the biggest hotel in the world.

### III

#### *THE QUEEN OF THE GOLDEN STATE*

(FROM A GUIDE-BOOK—WITH ANNOTATIONS AND AN IMPRESSION  
OF CHINATOWN)

“Serene, indifferent to Fate,  
Thou sittest at the Western Gate.”

SAN FRANCISCO—no well-bred American, unless he comes from Chicago, ever says 'Frisco—is a delicious combination of wealth and wickedness, splendour and squalor, vice, virtue, villainy, beauty, ugliness, solitude and silence, rush and row—in short, San Francisco is just San Francisco, and that's all there is to it, as they say there. It was discovered and settled by Franciscan friars. It would be no place for them now.

It is also quite a considerable city as to size. This is what the local guide-book says :

“It is bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean, on the north by Golden Gate Strait and the Bay of San Francisco, on the east by the bay, and on the south by San Mateo County.”

One would naturally expect a city bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean to have a considerable water frontage, some nine thousand miles, in fact. This, however, is not quite the case ; it is only the American guide-booker's way of putting it.

As a matter of fact, San Francisco is a most picturesque city of some three hundred thousand inhabitants, and it is spread over the bay shore and the adjacent hills to the extent of about twenty-seven thousand acres. It is the eighth city in size in the United States, and the third in commercial rank, but it is not jealous either of new York or Chicago. It is the capital of God's country, and with that it is modestly content. A page advertisement of a magazine in the guide-book begins with the query :

“Are you interested in God's country?”

It doesn't quite say Heaven, but the implied analogy is obvious.

Still, even San Francisco has to keep its end up, and it is just a little sore on the subject of earthquakes.

“These,” says my guide-booker, “are of rare occurrence. For the past half century there are not known to have been more than half a dozen

lives lost from the effects of earthquakes ; while in the New England and Middle States and in the Mississippi Valley hundreds are killed annually by sunstroke, lightning, hurricanes, and tornadoes, in addition to the millions of dollars' worth of property destroyed by tornadoes and blizzards."

Down east they say that the drink and other things you get in the West do all that these can do, and a bit over. This, of course, is mere jealousy ; and to this San Francisco is as serenely indifferent as she is of Fate.

She also seems to be indifferent to everything else. Even dollars. This doesn't sound true, but it is. The splendid recklessness of the Argonauts of the fifties still glows in the blood of the true San Franciscan.

Quite a short time ago a man worth a couple of million dollars—a comparative pauper in a place where they think nothing of paying three millions for a house—gambled every cent he had on the success of a certain more or less honest deal. A friend of his had interests the other way, and dumped down more millions to block the deal. He blocked it. They met at their club the evening after the smash, and conversed as follows :



"Well, how goes it?"

"D——d bad."

"In that—deal?"

"Steal, I call it."

"How much?"

"Whole caboodle! Want a janitor up yonder?"

"Janitor—no. I want a nervy man to come in with me. Come?"

"I'm there."

And now those two men are piling up millions together instead of betting them against each other. That's San Francisco.

The Golden City is entered naturally enough by a Golden Gate. It is as proud of its Golden Gate and bay as Sydney is of "our harbour," and that is saying a good deal. All the same, Sydney doesn't quite like California calling itself God's country.

My guide-booker says, "The entrance through the Golden Gate cannot be surpassed." If he said that inside Sydney Heads he would be thrown to the sharks. And, as a matter of fact, having said that which is not the truth he would in some measure deserve his fate. Moreover, outside the Golden Gate there is a bar, of which more anon.

There are other bars in the city which are safer except for millionaires, because you can't spend less than twenty-five cents in them. A drunk in San Francisco is therefore an undertaking not to be entered on lightly.

Talking of millionaires naturally suggests Nob Hill, the millionaire quarter of the Golden City. It is veritably a place of palaces. I have never seen so many splendid houses collected in such a small area. Their price in bricks and mortar alone runs anywhere from two to four millions, and yet it is a literal fact that the streets between them are grass-grown. If I had five dollars I should be inclined to bet them against five cents that this is a combination which no other city on earth can show.

The reason, of course, is that on the mountainous streets which the cable-cars climb traffic of any other sort is practically impossible. No good American walks more than a block or so on a quite level street, and you might as well ask him to walk up the side of a house as to climb Nob Hill.

Wherefore the cable-cars rush solitary up and down through a wilderness of stone-paved, grass-grown streets, flanked by palaces whose owners,



I presume, have horses and carriages. How they get them down to the city and up again is one of the two or three unsolved problems which I brought away with me. Another of these is: Why did the practical American genius think it worth while to pave the precipices which they call streets round Nob Hill?

Talking about streets reminds me that they don't say street much in San Francisco. There isn't time. They just mention the name. This is the way my guide-booker speaks somewhat flippantly of the streets in Millionairetown:

"Upon taking the car you immediately pass through the banking and insurance district, climb up one of the steepest hills of the city to Nob Hill, passing on the left at the corner of Powell the late Senator Stanford's residence, corner of Mason, the late Mark Hopkins' residence. . . . Corner of Taylor, the residence of the late A. M. Towne. . . . Corner of Jones, Mr. Whittles'. . . . Corner of Taylor, the Huntington residence, while opposite is the residence of the late Charles Croker, adjoining, and on the corner of Jones is the residence of his son, W. H. Croker."

"Powell" has a cable one and a quarter inches in

diameter, twenty-six thousand feet long, and weighing sixty-six thousand six hundred and twenty-five pounds. Some San Franciscan cables last three months. This was expected to last about five weeks. You can understand how terrific the clutch and the wear and tear must be when you sit down on the front seat of a car carrying thirty or forty people, and see a hill half as steep again as the one from Richmond up to the Star and Garter rush down underneath you at about sixteen miles an hour. It was here that the newly landed Chinaman saw his first cable-car and made the historic remark :

“No pushee, no pullee ; all same go like hellee,” which brings me, no very great distance, only a few blocks in fact, from Millionaireville to Chinatown.

Chinatown, San Francisco, is a city within a city. Go through it by night as I did with one who knows its inmost secrets, and you will find that it is also a cancer in the body corporate of a fair city (which is itself one of the most politely and delightfully wicked on earth), a foul blot on a fair land, a smudge of old-world filth across a page written by the most nervous hands and the keenest brains that modern civilisation has produced.

Geographically, as San Francisco is bounded on

the west by the Pacific Ocean, etc., Chinatown is bounded by "California" and "Pacific," "Kearny" and "Stockton." It has a population of ten thousand Mongolians, and an unknown number of Americans and Europeans, men and women, who have lost caste so hopelessly that they can no longer live among their own kind. The men certainly would not be considered fit society even for an American politician.

As for the women—well you see most of them painted and powdered and tricked out in scanty, tawdry finery, sitting in little rooms behind lattices open on to the street, and opposite these the wayfarer, western or eastern, European or American, Jap or Chinaman, may stand and peer in. There are whole streets of these latticed rooms, and the women are of all nationalities. The leaseholders pay enormous rents for the houses, and their owners are amongst the most respected citizens of San Francisco.

To these last it is only due to say that San Francisco is also a city of magnificent churches, and that it sends every month or so many missionaries, male and female, travelling in palace-cars and the saloons of steamers, to enlighten the heathen.

Many of the good citizens aforesaid subscribe tens of thousands of dollars both to the churches and missions, and so, somehow, I suppose, they get the account squared.

During my stroll through this quarter of Chinatown, I must admit that I saw very few Chinamen. Of Japs, Tonkinese, Sandwich Islanders, niggers, half castes, and the lower-down sort of American, there were plenty, and business appeared to be fairly brisk.

The better-class San Franciscan doesn't go to Chinatown simply because he doesn't need to. In fact, as a distinguished and experienced resident said to me after I had been through Chinatown :

"My dear Mr. Griffith, Chinatown may be pretty bad, but anyhow it's run open and above board, as anybody can go and see that likes to take the trouble. If you were stopping here a month instead of two or three days, I could show you things that Chinatown isn't a circumstance to. You just roof all San Francisco in, and you'll have the biggest, dandiest, high-toned, up-to-date——"

"Yes," I interrupted, "I see what you mean. I heard about that in the train. Sorry I'm not stopping."

This of course only referred to decent, Christian vice, the sort which some of the most respectable of us practice without compunction as long as we're not found out. But when you have eastern and western vice mixed, as you do in Chinatown and San Francisco, you get a compound calculated to raise the gorge of a graven image. There are certain crimes which have no names, and of such is the wickedness of Chinatown.

Some one once said that the exterior of a house was a pretty good criterion of the character of the people who lived in it.

This is certainly true of Chinatown. The streets are narrow, ill-paved, and dirty. They also smell, as the other streets in San Francisco don't. Those who have travelled know that the Purple East has a smell entirely its own, just as a London lodging-house has.

Moreover, wherever a piece of the East like Chinatown is transplanted into the West, you get that smell, full-bodied and entire. Wherefore, when I dived into Chinatown, San Francisco, I remarked :

“ Why, is this King Street, Hongkong, or Malay Street, Singapore ? ”



The East never changes, no matter whether it is west or east. The restaurants, with their gaudily carved beams and their queer windows, with their upstairs rooms, containing priceless treasures of Oriental art, their iron money-chests, with half a dozen different locks on them, so that they could only be opened in the presence of all the partners in the concern; the paper lanterns outside, the weird hieroglyphical signs, the little joss tables in the inner compartments of the shops, with their images and odorous incense sticks—it was all the undiluted Orient, ages old, in the midst of the newest of the Occidental civilisations, one of those queer paradoxes which go to show the looseness of our most rigid principles and the shallowness of our deepest convictions.

After seeing sundry other things which would be difficult of description in printable English, I made a tour of a common lodging-house in Chinatown. I have slept in a common lodging-house in London, and I have seen humanity go to sleep under many and various conditions; but I never saw anything like this.

Only a few hundred yards away was the Palace

Hotel, with its rooms at four dollars a night ; here you could sleep for five cents,—twopence-halfpenny, —but what sleeping !

Little, dark, stifling cells—I have seen infinitely better ones in prisons—lit through a little window by a caged gas-jet on the flagged and iron-railed footway which ran round each floor inside the court within which these doss-houses are built. In the cell a narrow wooden bedstead, covered with unwashed rags and nothing else. Below in the court, horrors unnameable.

In the particular lodging-house which I visited I was shown a big, dark, hideous apartment, a perfect Black Hole, in which nine of the richest merchants of Chinatown—and some of them are very rich—were confined on ransom by the gang known as the High-Binders for four months until some died and the others paid. A remnant who stuck out were released by the police and a detachment of the United States Militia after a regular siege. It was Alsatia over again, and yet it happened less than a dozen years ago.

As I was feeling my way down the stairs a figure rose out of a corner on one of the landings, and I heard a thin voice say :



“Boss, gimme ten cents—I’m hungry!”

It was the first time I had ever heard an American beg, and it was quite a shock. Somehow, the accent seemed to add an infinite pathos to the words; perhaps because until now I had only heard it from the lips of the proudly prosperous. As I passed he turned his face after me, and the light from a distant gas-lamp fell on it. It was ghastly in its thinness and paleness, and yet it was refined, and the voice, if not the speech, was that of an educated man. I gave him a quarter, and my guide said:

“Guess that’ll give him two days in heaven. It’s opium he’s hungry for. Bin there myself.”

When we left the lodging-house we went a few yards along the crowded, weirdly lit street with its swarms of paper-lanterns, and then we plunged down a narrow alley up which there drifted a wave of stench, dominated by the acrid, penetrating smell of opium.

Presently I discovered that there were lower depths in Chinatown even than the doss-house and the brothel. Here were not houses, only miserable sheds and shanties round an unpaved courtyard foul beyond description.

We went into some of the shanties. There stood in each near the door a little bench, and on this were two or three pipes and some tiny pots filled with what looked like black-brown treacle. It was opium, and each pot contained ten cents' worth of Heaven and Hell, the Heaven of oblivion opening out into dreamland of Paradise, and then the Hell of the awakening horror.

Behind the bench squatted a half-clad skeleton, pipe in hand and lamp beside him. He opened his half-shut eyes as we entered, and murmured :

“Wantee smoke, tlen cent !” Then he recognised my guide, and added, “Ah, wantee look ; all light.” Then his eyelids fell again, he dipped his needle in his pot, and got ready for another whiff.

Round the walls of the shanty were two tiers of bunks, just a few planks propped on bare poles. There were ragged blankets on the boards, and on these, with pipe and pot and lamp, lay other scantily clad skeletons, some frizzling the globule of opium in the flame, some rolling it on the flat top of the pipe-bowl, others inhaling the magic blue smoke, others motionless and lifeless, their souls, if they had any, in paradise. One of the skeletons had once been the figure of a white woman.

Outside we found other hovels, but without lamps. We struck matches in one, and found other figures, some white and some yellow, huddled about the filthy floor.

"Free dosses," said the guide, in his curt speech, "they're broke. Spent their last dime on a smoke and got fired. After that it's the poor-house or the bay."

As we were picking our way out of the court, he continued :

"There's a cocaine fiend here ; better see him. George, where are you ? "

The remains of a man tottered out from under a shed. He was white, what there was left of him. As soon as his miserable eyes caught sight of me he began a whining, rambling account of how he fell a victim to the drug ; his stock narrative, I suppose.

Then he rolled up a dirty, ragged shirt sleeve, and showed me a thing of skin and bone that had once been an arm. It was pitted and seamed and scratched from elbow to wrist. I had seen two or three choice samples of leprosy and other diseases that horrible night, but this made me nearer sick than any of them.

He had a strangely extemporised syringe of wood and quill and sealing-wax, and a piece of hypodermic needle in his other hand. He picked out a comparatively vacant spot, drove in the needle, and pushed. The skin swelled up in a little lump. It may only have been water, certainly the syringe was made ready for the occasion, but in a moment or two he straightened up, his eye grew brighter, and his voice stronger as he asked me for a dime to buy a supper. I gave it to him, and he crept back into his hovel. I went out into the street feeling that I had been in Hell.

We went to wind up the night at the Chinese Theatre ; but the performance was nearly over. So, instead, we made a much more interesting excursion through the subterranean dressing-rooms of the company. Women never appear on Chinese boards. So when we visited the ladies' dressing-rooms we found men and boys in female attire, which, after all, doesn't differ very much from the male, standing before little mirrors painting and powdering themselves and making-up their eyes and eyebrows, and fixing themselves up generally for all the world like an European actress.

In other dressing-rooms we found mild-eyed

Celestials trying on or taking off masks hideous enough to frighten even an American baby. The rooms were merely little cellars connected by narrow, low, stone passages. Their furniture was a little table under the mirror, a big, brass-bound chest, on which stood the inevitable opium apparatus, and a low, dirty sleeping-couch.

The whole scene was literally a piece of the underworld. A few years ago it was veritably so for unfortunates who were decoyed into its depths and never got out again. That is done with now, but for all that I felt better when I was out in the street again.

If I had dreamt that night, the dream would certainly have been a nightmare. As it is, whenever I hear any one letting his emotions loose over the glories and triumphs of civilisation I think of Chinatown, San Francisco, and remain in a comparatively humble frame of mind.

## *A SEA-INTERLUDE*

### ACROSS THE PACIFIC ON A STEAM-ROLLER

(WITH INCIDENTAL REMARKS ON THE PARADISE THEREOF  
AND THE GREAT TROPICAL FRAUD)

#### I

BY the end of my third day's stay in San Francisco a splendid sea-wind had blown the smell of Chinatown out of my nostrils, and the mephitic stuffiness of its streets and shops and restaurants out of my lungs. I would fain have stayed longer, for I was beginning to like the Queen of the Golden Shore, and some of her loyal subjects were beginning to like me, wherefore there was every prospect of a goodly time ahead for me. When your Californian likes you he wants to give you his house, and his town, and his clubs, and all that therein is, and when he doesn't he makes no secret of it.

But for the man who has connections to make, who has to hitch trains on to steamers and steamers



on to trains, and get across the world in the shortest possible time, even the temptations of Californian hospitality must be in vain. So the next morning I and my baggage were jolted over a couple of miles of appalling streets—the one defect in the beauty of the Golden City—at a cost of three dollars and partial dislocation of the vertebral column, to the wharf where a very polite citizen was obliging enough to carry my steamer trunk on board the *Nippon Maru*, for half a dollar more.

The crowd on the wharf was cosmopolitan enough even for the Drive at Singapore, or the Praya at Hongkong. Of course there were globe-trotters like myself, speaking many tongues from Russian to American; there were commercial travellers, mostly German, with mountains of samples prepared with great cunning to suit the varied tastes of Hawaiians, Japs, and Chinese; there were short, thick-set, flat-faced Japs in grey tweed trousers, tail coats, and top hats, fresh from the colleges and the counting-houses of the Eastern States; there were grave, impassive Chinese, mandarins and millionaires, in silken robes and black skull-caps (with the little red button on top),



with their wives and children also in silken vesture and orthodoxly shapeless; and then there were the coolies and sailors, Jap and Chinese, with a sprinkling of wicked-eyed Lascars and mild Hindoos.

To finish the picture, on the Government wharf hard by a detachment of blue-clad, felt-hatted United States troops were lining up for embarkation on one of the transports bound for Manila.

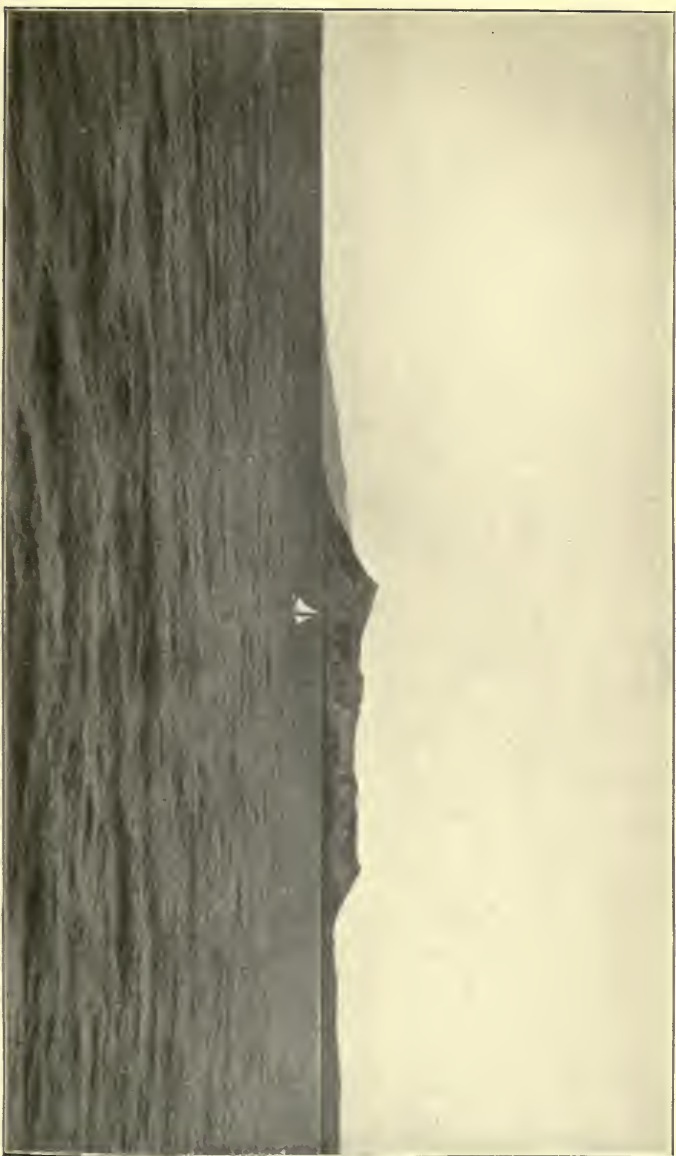
The good sea-wind did not seem quite so good when we got outside the Golden Gate, for there was a villainous sea running on the bar and through the narrow passage between the tail of the bar and the rock-bound coast, which is called the Main Ship Channel. In a bad sea this is one of the most ticklish pieces of navigation in the world.

On the port side, as we went out, the breakers were piling themselves up into mountains of foam on the end of the bar a couple of hundred yards away. To starboard, another two or three hundred yards off, the big Pacific rollers were thundering along the base of the cliffs, flinging their spume and spindrift sky-high. The water in between was just what one would expect it to be, and so passenger after passenger, male and female, missionary and mercantile, disappeared from the deck.

I afterwards learnt that there was much suffering below, and many of the victims did not reappear till we reached the smooth, sunlit waters which wash the shores of what the American tourist agencies, since the Annexation, have christened "the Paradise of the Pacific." The Jap passengers collapsed first of all.

When I had made the closer acquaintance of the *Nippon* I found that her sailors and quartermasters and junior officers were Japs, while her stewards and barmen were Chinese. The captain and first officer were English, and the chief engineer, of course, a Scotchman. I have often wondered how many "Chiefs" on the Seven Seas are not Scotch.

The *Nippon*, like most Japanese mail-boats, was cheap and gaudy. She gave evidence of her cheapness by bursting a steam-pipe just as she was fighting her way through the channel. It might have been serious, but it wasn't, though it lengthened our passage by several hours, for the wasted steam, instead of getting into the cylinders, went roaring away in noisy impotence up to the cloudy sky which overhung the alleged Pacific Ocean.



Diamond Head, Honolulu. The town lies in the bay about halfway between the two headlands.



On the third night we got into smoother water and stopped while the Chief and his assistants repaired the damage. The next morning at breakfast the deserted saloon began to fill up.

So far I and a fellow-traveller from Chicago had had the corner table to ourselves. By lunch-time it was full of lady missionaries going to China and Japan. For three or four of them that was destined to be their last voyage. The nicest and most pleasantly spoken of them was travelling many thousands of miles to meet an unspeakable fate at the hands of the Boxers.

On the fourth morning great blue-grey masses of land began to rise up to port and ahead of us, and that day we spent steaming through summer seas under a lovely sky, between shores whose beauty may well have led Captain Cook's sailors to believe that they had at last reached the long-dreamed-of Islands of the Blest.

For all that, I must confess that I was disappointed with the approach to Honolulu. Even the most patriotic Hawaiian would, I think, agree with me that the capital has not been placed either on the most beautiful of the islands or in the most picturesque position possible.

Still, you would travel far before you found a fairer sea-flanked city than Honolulu itself. It is a city of broad, tree-shaded streets, of buildings which are dignified without being pretentious, of palaces and Government offices built on a scale of splendour which argues eloquently for the financial conceptions of former monarchs and a belief in their destinies which the sceptical Fates and the American Republic have since declined to justify.

There are, of course, many churches and schools in Honolulu. Your Hawaiian takes his or her religion in a cheerfully earnest fashion, and sings hymns with keener delight than any one else on earth. Still, the schools and churches of Honolulu were not built wisely. Where everything else is beautiful, softly lined, and tree-embowered, they are hard, bare, and angular, even after the fashion of the Ebenezers of the Midlands and the North of England. The very gaol looks nice in comparison with them.

But the private houses—for instance, those stretching away along King Street, west, to Waikiki, perhaps the loveliest bathing-place in the world—are, after all, the pleasantest memories that one brings away from Honolulu. Mostly low and



broad-verandahed, white-painted, and embowered in foliage of every shade of green, faced with smooth, emerald lawns spangled with flower-beds blazing bright with every colour that Nature loves to paint her tropical flowers, they seemed rather the dwellings of lotus-eaters in "the land where it is always afternoon" than the houses of hard-headed, keen-witted business men and politicians, mostly of American descent, who have not only piled up many millions by various methods, but have also created this leafy paradise out of the bare and swampy seashore that it was when Captain Cook landed upon it.

I happened to arrive in Honolulu at a very interesting time. The Monroe Doctrine had been stretched across the Pacific from San Francisco to the Philippines, and Honolulu was a sort of hitching-post which kept it from sagging into the water. Among the white population there was a good deal more American than English being spoken. The harbour was full of American transports. Blue-clad, very business-like-looking American troops were marching and drilling and patrolling all over the place. Many of the men wore, in addition to their regimentals, portrait-



medallions of the President or their best girls—a sight to make a British War Office Person ill for the rest of his official days. For myself, it liked me well.

Saving the American occupation, but not by any means unconnected with it, the four salient facts of Honolulu seemed to me to be Missionaries, Mosquitos, Millionaires, and Morality spelt backwards.

The missionaries and the mosquitos came to Honolulu at the same time, about seventy-five years ago. The mosquitos are supposed to have come in old sugar-casks from Mexico, and it is known that the missionaries came chiefly first-class from San Francisco. I mention the coincidence for what it is worth. Both are at present going strong.

The missionaries practically own and run the place with the assistance of the sugar millionaires who helped the United States to annex the islands. The mosquitos are, with one exception, the most venomous and insidious that I have ever suffered from.

There is one notable point of difference between the missionaries and the mosquitos in Honolulu. The missionaries and their congregations sing

voluminously, and also very prettily. The Hawaiian mosquito does not sing. He makes his descent silently and stealthily, sucks the life-blood out of you, and goes away, leaving you to scratch and swear and wonder how on earth he managed to get his work in without you knowing it.

There are some unregenerates, both white and bronze, still in Honolulu who say something like this about the missionaries and the country. This may or may not have any truth in it. It is certainly quite true that the missionaries have done an immense amount of good in the Sandwich Islands. It is also true that they and their descendants form the aristocracy and ruling class of the islands. They have the most magnificent houses and most beautiful estates. They also run the most lucrative businesses. Not the worthy pastors themselves, of course. In Hawaii, the word "missionary" means not only the missionaries themselves, but their descendants to the third and fourth generations. Perhaps the most good-natured way to put it would be to say that here the labourer was worthy of his hire and saw that he got it.

But there was one deadly contrast in Honolulu

which I frankly say shocked and horrified me, hardened globe-trotter as I am! I don't think I ever saw a place which possesses more churches, schools, missions, and other missionary machinery to the acre than Honolulu. It also runs considerably to saloons and hotels with bar-annexes; but these justify their existence by paying enormous licences to the revenue. Wherefore they charge the thirsting citizen a shilling a time for a drink, no matter how small or common; which, of course, either keeps down drunkenness or punishes those who drink with poverty. Millionaires, and, some whisper, the missionaries, take their liquid comforts at home.

But one night after dinner, having nothing else to do but smoke and listen to small talk in the intervals of fighting the mosquitos, I went off by myself to explore the Asiatic Quarter. I had no hint or direction from anybody, and, by sheer accident, I found myself in a street which was the exact replica of the slave-market in Chinatown, San Francisco.

Slaves of all colours and nationalities, white and brown and yellow and black, were sitting behind the lattices of their prisons. Chinese and Japanese

"Houses of Delight" were running full steam ahead. It was only natural that I should catch myself wondering whether I had not been spirited back into Chinatown, instead of walking the streets of Holy Honolulu where the missionaries and the churches have reigned practically supreme for fifty years.

One curiously revolting feature of the scene was this: The Americanisation of Hawaii was proceeding apace just then. Four or five big transports, bound for Manila, were in the harbour. There were American sentries at the Government Buildings over which Old Glory floated from sunrise to sunset. Squads of American troops drilled daily in the open places. American patrols marched through the streets by night, and American soldiers and sailors jostled with Jap and Chinaman, Negro and Malay along the narrow pavements of the Hawaiian slave-market. It was a curious mingling of East and West, not by any means flattering to the West.

The next day I asked certain citizens who should have known how this thing came to be in such a godly country, and the various answers about came to this: "The Government and the Churches

have done their best to shut those places up, but somehow they haven't succeeded. And then, you see, they pay enormous rents."

"But who owns the property?" I asked one old and highly respected resident.

"Well, if *I* did I shouldn't tell you," he replied. "Come and have a drink!"

It was a hot day and I thought I might as well leave it at that.

Later on this moral plague-spot became a physical plague-spot as well. The Black Death spread its sombre wings over it, and the purging fires have swept it in smoke and flying flame from the face of the insulted earth up to the yet more insulted heavens. Wherefore the Paradise of the Pacific ought to be a good deal cleaner now than it was when I was there.

That afternoon I called at Government House and sent my card in to Mr. Sanford B. Dole, President of the Hawaiian Republic. He is the man who came to the front when the reactionary tactics of King Kalakaua and his sister and successor, Liliuokalani, raised the somewhat important question as to whether the Hawaiian Islands were going to fall into line with civilisation or fall back into a



Sanford B. Dole, First Governor of the Territory of Hawaii.







state of semi-barbarism—for that is about what it came to.

President Dole is a “missionary”; that is to say, he belongs to the clerical aristocracy of Honolulu. He is not a clergyman himself, and he has the credit of belonging to one of the very few missionary families in the islands which have not become wealthy.

The last President that I had interviewed was Paul Krüger, late of Kerk Street, Pretoria. There was a very striking difference between the two men. The Boer was bulky, slow of speech and motion, with manners unspeakable; also little keen eyes which looked at you piercingly for a moment, and then dodged away—cunning incarnate in the flesh and a good deal both of the cunning and the flesh.

Still, at the time, I confess that I thought him a man, and, in his way, a great one—not a common boodler who would squeeze his country for all it was worth, and then, at the first note of danger, bolt with all the plunder he could lay his hands on.

When I went into President Dole’s Council Chamber—which had once been the Queen’s boudoir, and in Kalakaua’s time before her, the

scene of many a half-barbaric orgie—I was greeted by a tall, rather slight, but well set-up man dressed in spotless white.

He had the air of being at once virile and venerable, for his hair and his long, almost patriarchal beard were both grey. But the figure was alert. He walked up and down the room the whole time we were talking. The grey-blue eyes were quick and keen and steady. I may also add, *en parenthèse*, that he was one of the handsomest men I have ever spoken to.

He told me the story of the battle between reaction and advancement, corruption and comparative cleanliness, just as a man who had seen it all but had taken no share in it might have done. The story is history now, and needn't be repeated here. To me the most interesting fact was that President Dole told it without once mentioning himself until it became unavoidable.

When the fighting was over there were seven conspicuous citizens of Honolulu in prison under sentence of death as conspirators against the Commonwealth, and it rested with Mr. Dole to say whether they should be executed or not.

“It was, of course, a very painful position for

me to be placed in," he said. "You see I was the head of the Provisional Government and Chief Magistrate, and some of them were personal acquaintances of my own."

"Then, after all, you had something to do with it, Mr. President? That's the first time I've heard you mention yourself in the whole story." !

There was a smile under the heavy moustache as he answered :

"Oh, yes, of course, I had a good deal to do with it. When the revolution was over they elected me President ; and the prisoners—well, we sentenced them to different terms of imprisonment, and then let them out gradually. To tell you the truth I hadn't much fancy for signing death-warrants."

I was afterwards told on quite reliable authority that if the revolution had not succeeded, Sanford B. Dole and a few others would undoubtedly have been hung.

Mr. Dole, being of American descent, very naturally considered that the United States were the proper Power to run the Hawaiian Islands, whether the Hawaiians liked it or not. It is a way that all great Powers have with small ones. We

have it ourselves to a considerable extent. In fact, we once had these same islands with all their vast possibilities. That was in the dark ages of British diplomacy when colonies were "not wanted." So a few distinguished idiots in Downing Street gave orders for the flag to be hauled down from the flagstaff on the Old Fort of Honolulu. After which it avails little for an Englishman to talk about Cousin Jonathan stealing the islands for himself.

Mr. Dole assisted conspicuously and, I believe, quite conscientiously in the transfer. He saw that it was either annexation or semi-barbarism and corruption. He thought that what great Powers call annexation and small ones call stealing was the better of the two, and I think he was right.

Hawaii is now a Territory ; and Sanford B. Dole is its Governor. Still, I was a little afraid that there might be something of prophecy in the last remark he made as we shook hands.

"There is no doubt about the future or the prosperity of the islands," he said, in answer to my last question. "With good settled government capital will come in, as it has been doing, and everything will go ahead. But," he added very gravely, "if we get the millionaire monopolist

and the professional politician over here, they'll ruin us."

"Exactly!" I said. "Here you have the paradise, the Eden of the Pacific. Politics will supply the serpent."

He shook his head and smiled, and I went away without telling him that I had travelled from Chicago with a gentleman who had been to Washington to see about the introduction of that self-same serpent.

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When people who have not been there read about the tropics in books, especially in story-books, the impression they get is one of general gorgeousness pervading the heavens and the earth, and a human state of things not far removed from what some of us honestly hope to deserve some day when days have ceased to count.

Blue seas lie rippling gently under azure skies; islands of almost inconceivable beauty, palm-crowned and coral-fringed, gem the surface of the waveless waters. The heat of the sun is tempered by cool, scented breezes.

The day begins and ends with sunrises and

sunsets which seem like the opening and shutting of the gates of Paradise.

The nights are languorous dreams of soft delights under skies spangled with myriads of stars such as northern eyes have never seen. On other nights earth and sea are bathed in silvery moonlight such as never fell on northern sea or shore.

Some authors get their moon and stars shining at the same time. These have probably done their travelling in an armchair. Diana of the Tropics is a good deal too autocratic for that.

Those are the tropics of the novelist and the traveller who wants to make his untravelled readers envious. As a story-writer I have myself sinned thus ; wherefore, partly, this confession.

The trouble with most people who have described the tropics in fiction and otherwise is that they leave too much out. All that they put in is correct. You really can see all these beauties, and more, between Cancer and Capricorn ; but you don't see them everywhere or all the time.

Another very serious fault with your tropical word-artist is that he generally ignores the swamps, the fevers, the agues, the rains which come down like bursting water-spouts, the hurricanes which



blow brick and stone walls about as if they were paper. Further, as to the rippling sunlit sea, they too often omit to state that, when it is inclined that way it can get up into waves which will take a ship clean over a reef and land it halfway up a hillside, and that it has a swell through which a ship may wallow for days, rolling scuppers under every minute of the day and night for weeks on end.

This, by the way, is one of the most villainous features of the tropical Pacific. For instance, you wake up out of a nightmare-slumber, bruised and sore and sweating, after hours of sleepy struggle to brace yourself somehow between the sides of your berth so that you may not be flung against the opposite side of your cabin. You watch for a favourable moment—the best one is just when she is going to stop and your side is down. Miss this, and you'll wish you'd waited for the next.

In spite of all your precautions your luggage has broken loose and has taken charge of the floor. Nothing is where you put it the night before.

Your hair-brushes are under the lower berth in the farthest possible corner. Your tooth-brush is probably on the other side under the sofa ; and

your box of tooth-powder has got into one of your boots and has emptied itself there. Your bath-sponge has probably carried away from the rack, and got itself saturated with the contents of your only bottle of scent, which has dashed itself to pieces in its struggles to leap out of its appointed place.

You squeeze this sorrowfully out into the tumbler, if there's one left unbroken. At peril of life and limb you grope around and find your deck-shoes, and then you start out for the bathroom. The ship is groaning and shuddering like a man with tertian ague and toothache. If your sea-legs are good you get there without a broken limb or many additions to your bruises.

The water in the bath is having a miniature storm all to itself. The bath is usually marble nowadays, and very hard. If you lie down in it you are absolutely at the mercy of the raging waters, and they dash you from side to side, and end to end till you struggle feebly to your feet and try to stand.

You clutch at anything for support. Sometimes, as happened to a fellow-voyager of mine, it is the steam-pipe for heating the water, and off comes

the skin in a twinkling. When you have got into something like an erect position you keep yourself from being hurled out with one hand and pull the string of the shower with the other.

"Swish," comes the douche, and you have a moment of cooling luxury. Then follows the slow inexorable heave of the next roll. You hold on, partly to the string; the water rises up on one side of the bath and slops over, probably filling your shoes. The douche leaves you, crosses the bathroom at an angle of sixty degrees, and drenches your pyjamas, and, peradventure, your towels as well. If this has not happened, you stagger out and dry yourself in the intervals of trying to sit or stand.

Whatever else has happened to you in your bath, you've got cool for a few minutes. Meanwhile the pitiless sun has been rising higher, the exertion of drying yourself has put you into a violent perspiration, and you are about as wet when you give it up in despair as you were when you began.

You get into your pyjamas and shoes, and, if the demoralisation of the tropics has gone far enough with you, and the bar is open, you go and get a cocktail to put a little life into you after a night

of gasping, perspiring insomnia. This function is tropically termed "sweetening the bilge-water," and is greatly in vogue among those who have sat up late in the smoking-room overnight.

Then you pull yourself up on deck by handrails and anything else you can get hold of. The morning air is delicious in its virgin freshness, and you begin to draw new breaths of life. The decks are wet and sloppy, but still cool. In a few hours the pitch will be boiling in the seams, and the planks will be hot enough to melt the rubber soles off your shoes.

The masts and funnels are describing slow arcs across the vault of the Firmament; deck-chairs are skating about, chasing each other around, or huddling themselves in scared heaps in the safest and wettest corners of the deck.

Down below there is the tinkling clatter of crockery, mingled with language from the stewards who are trying to set the table for breakfast. When you have cooled off a bit you nerve yourself to go below again into the furnished oven you call your room and get dressed. Perhaps you have to shave—but this is an added agony which may be passed over in silence.

You stagger back on deck to get cool again. You meet your fellow-sufferers and say things about the ship with disparaging references to round-bottomed old tanks, butter-tubs, steam-rollers, and the like. These things are not exaggerated. I crossed the Pacific from Honolulu to Sydney on a steam-roller called the *Alameda*, and I am speaking of that which I know.

Then, perhaps after another visit to the bar, you go to breakfast. You eat your meals in the tropics partly because you must repair the exhaustion of perpetual perspiration, and partly because you have paid for them in advance. Naturally, you don't like the company to get too far ahead of you.

If it wasn't for this you would probably eat a great deal less and be much better, but human nature is human even in the saloon of a steam-roller on the Pacific with the thermometer standing at 97° Fahr. Thus you eat and drink and loaf your way through the listless, sweltering hours, and vaguely wonder what your liver will be like when you get ashore.

There is another speciality of the tropics to which the tropical glory-mongers have never done



full justice. This is the mosquito. Of course, there are mosquitos outside the tropics. A veracious British Columbian once told me that on the Yukon they shoot them with revolvers and catch them in seine nets.

The tropical mosquito, however, does not run to size as a rule. In Guayaquil I have seen them a little smaller than sparrows, but they were exceptions. Still, for his size, the tropical mosquito carries a greater load of sin and responsibility than any other beast of prey inside the confines of Creation.

I never really knew what artistic profanity was till I met him. I had no idea of the magnificent capabilities of the English language, helped out with a little American, till he had his first meal off me.

I have said before that the Honolulu mosquito does not sing, so the first night out I went to bed unsuspecting, and foolishly congratulating myself that I had got rid of him for a time. I knew better when I woke up in the still watches of the night, scraping myself from head to foot, like Job with his potsherd—it was too hot for bed- or any other kind of clothes—and wondering what had got me.

I turned up the light, and there was the cloud



of witnesses. I gave up the struggle there and then, got into my pyjamas, and went on deck with a rug over my arm and many evil thoughts in my heart.

One of those mosquitos got as far as Samoa with me. He was the only one that the sea air seemed to agree with, and he was as elusive as a Boer brigand surrounded by half a dozen British armies. I killed him the morning we sighted Apia. He was too gorged to fly. It was literally blood for blood, only all the blood was on one side.

I didn't discover any mosquitos in Samoa. At least, none discovered me, but that is perhaps because I escaped without sleeping there, and the old steam-roller was lying a long way off the shore. There were, however, plenty of the other winged pests which are characteristic of most tropical paradises.

Some of us walked up to Vailima in response to the invitation of a fellow-traveller, a rich German merchant, who had bought the ruins of Robert Louis Stevenson's house—it was torn to pieces by the shells during the bombardment—and “restored” it. I hope the gentle ghost of

"R. L. S." will never revisit it in the glimpses of the moon.

Samoa is one of those tropical paradises over which the romancers have spread themselves with the most lavish verbal embroidery. The cold, or rather tepid, truth as to my own brief experiences of it is this.

We trudged over four miles and a half of muddy road, under a grey, leaden sky that would have done justice to an English mid-summer day. From this descended an almost impalpable but drenching mist, the air was thick with flies and other intrusive things, which got into your eyes and nose and mouth and ears.

The exertion of plodding through the mud quickly reduced us to a state of almost intolerable limpness. It was like four and a half miles of Turkish bath adorned with tropical foliage. You had to get some of this foliage and swing it about with what vigour you chanced to have left, so that you might keep the flies far enough off to be able to breathe.

We took a languid interest in the shell-smashed and bullet-pierced trees by the wayside, and in the rude entrenchments which the Samoans had

thrown up, for it was along this road that the British and American detachments had to fight their way to dubious victory so as to get things ready for the German occupation.

At Vailima we had warm champagne, for not even all the wealth of our good-hearted host could buy an ounce of ice in Samoa, and we ate cakes and pineapples where Robert Louis Stevenson had alternately feasted and half starved, as he tells us in those daintily pathetic "Vailima Letters" of his.

But a proper respect for the eternal verities forces me to say that this place, round which so many reams of imaginative eulogy have been written and typewritten, entirely disappointed me. Everything was shabby and ragged and squalid except the newly "restored" house and the furniture, which might have been sent by telegraph from Tottenham Court Road that morning.

The avenue from the main road to the house, which the Samoans voluntarily made for Stevenson in repayment for the whole-hearted work he had done for them against the foreign aggressor, was puddle-strewn and inches deep in mud. The paddock was no better than you would have found round the shanty of a first-year selector

in Australia. There were no paths, only tracks, mostly mud. The historic stream was little more than a stone-strewn brook.

Even from the upper verandah of the house you can only just get a glimpse of the sea. A hill crowded with tangled tropical growth rises on either side of the little plateau on which the house stands. On the top of the one to the left hand as you look towards the sea is the grave of the dead Word-Magician. Behind the house another broken, tree-clad slope rising to the misty clouds ; and that is all.

Personally I would not live at Vailima, rent free and everything found, for a thousand a year. I know other places in the Pacific where with suitable society life would be a dream of delight if one only had a tent, a hammock, and about ten shillings sterling a week to spend.

The steam-roller did not stop long enough for us to attempt the ascent of the mountain. I left Vailima dejected and disappointed, in a state of mind which even the warm champagne had failed to cheer. I tramped back through the mud under the everlasting mist, and through the same cloud of flies.

When I got on board I found a sort of political demonstration, mingled with a cosmopolitan orgie going on.

The ship was crowded from end to end with splendid specimens of Samoan manhood. There was a brass band on deck, and the smoking-room was simply floating in champagne. When I got to the heart of matters I found that the most popular man in Samoa was leaving. He was the American Consul, and his name was Blacklock, which, being translated into Samoan, is Pillackie-Lockie. Certain friends of his—men who would raise you out of your boots on a pair of twos—were coming with us, and from Samoa to Auckland it was my privilege to travel with the hardest crowd I have ever been shipmates with.

This was just the beginning of the German occupation. During the bombardment the first shot fired from the German warship had wrecked the German Consulate on the beach instead of hitting the hills beyond, where Mataaffa's men were supposed to be concealed; and this, with other things, seemed to have produced a bad impression in the minds of the natives.

At any rate, after the second whistle had gone,

when the band played "God Save the Queen" and the "Star-Spangled Banner," the Samoans sang their versions of the words for all their lungs were worth, but when, in deference to the presence of the German Consul on board, an attempt was made at "Die Wacht am Rhein," there was first a deadly silence and then a deep-voice "hoo-o-o," which I interpreted as being the Samoan for "come out of it," or words to that effect.

This, by the way, is a humble, but by no means unmeaning "footnote to history."



**Part II**  
*PRISON LAND*



## A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON CONVICTS AND COLONISTS

THERE are not many portions of the sea-realm of Oceania, or, indeed, of the whole Southern Hemisphere, of which the name is so well and the history so little known as New Caledonia. Throughout Europe, not excepting even France, it has for fifty years been the name of a convict station. To the *forçat* and the *relégué* its name meant something even worse than the traditions of the old galleys could tell of. It meant banishment over an illimitable stretch of ocean ; and, through the hazes of distance, the French criminal, caged in the penal transport, saw horrors unspeakable. To him it was the Land of the Chain, of the Lash, and the Guillotine, a hell upon earth, a paradise of Nature transformed by despotism into an inferno of crime and cruelty, and, above all, it was the Land of Banishment. In earlier times it really was something like what the *evadés* who had reached

Australia, through a thousand miles of sea-peril and starvation, described it to be. It will be seen from the chapters which follow that all this has long ago been done away with, but even now the commandants of the various camps are careful to remind the visitor from the other ends of the earth, that not the least part of the punishment of transportation to New Caledonia consists in the fact of banishment for many years, perhaps for ever from France.

That is one of the reasons why France will never make a real living colony out of New Caledonia until its present criminal and semi-criminal population has utterly died out—a contingency which is not likely to come to pass while French rule in the Pacific endures. The Frenchman cannot colonise, although, curiously enough, under another flag he can become a most excellent colonist. Take him away from France and plant him, as in New Caledonia, under the tricolour and under the care of his all too paternal, perhaps it would be more correct to say maternal government, and, whether bond or free, he begins to get homesick, and a homesick man is the last person on earth to begin colony-making.

Of course, if you take him out in a convict transport and plant him on an island as a prisoner you can make a colonist of a sort out of him, and that is the sort you find in New Caledonia, a human machine whose initiative, if he ever had any, has been ground out of him, not so much by prison discipline, for that, as I shall show, is indulgent to a degree that would be quite incomprehensible in England ; but, rather, by a rigid system of supervision which permits him to do nothing for himself, which provides everything for him from the plough with which he breaks the virgin soil of his concession to the prize which he gets for a well-raised crop. Such a man walks on crutches all his life, and a colonist on crutches is an entirely hopeless, if not a quite impossible, person.

An experience of something over forty years has convinced all the most intelligent students of the question, that the convict civilisation of New Caledonia is a dream the realisation of which is made impossible by the conditions of the system itself.

During my last conversation with the Director of the Penal Administration, he asked me what I thought of the social conditions of the island, and

the possibility of sometime transforming it from a penal settlement into a free colony? He was intensely in earnest on the subject. He believed, or at least he did his best to believe, in the future of that beautiful native land of his, and I would have encouraged him in his loyal belief if I could have done so; but I had seen too much of real colonisation in many lands to be able to do that honestly, and so what I told him was this :

“Noumea is the heart of New Caledonia, as Paris is the heart of France. The greater part of it is founded upon what was once a miasmatic swamp, and, no matter what you do, the poison-germs will find their way to the surface, and pollute the atmosphere that you breathe. That is a concrete likeness of your society. It is based on a substratum of crime. For forty years the poison-germs of the mental disease which is called crime have been rising from your lowest social stratum and permeating all the others.”

He saw the justice of the parallel, and he tacitly admitted that the source of moral contagion was every whit as deeply rooted and as irremovable as the buried swamp that lies deep down beneath the





A Lake in the interior of New Caledonia.



palms and the flamboyants which shade the squares and the gardens of Noumea.

In Australia the matter was different. In the bad, old days men and women were shipped over seas for offences which would not earn fourteen days' hard labour now, and the majority of them were morally and physically sound. Moreover, they were Anglo-Saxons. They knew how to tackle the wilderness and subdue it, and when they won their freedom they mixed freely with freemen, and, in due course, the wilderness got subdued, and the new nations got started. That was because there was a maximum of individual, initiative, and a minimum of government control which made it possible for the man to work out his own moral and social redemption, and at the same time to shape a country for his children to dwell in. When I first went to Australia as a lad in the deck-house of a limejuicer, the letters M.L.A. didn't only mean Member of the Legislative Assembly. Sometimes they meant Mustn't Leave Australia; but to-day the penal settlements of fifty years ago are federated nations. Caledonia is still a convict settlement, and such it must remain until the last drop of convict blood within its confines solidifies in the veins of its last

dead criminal, or until its moral and social swamp is drained and purified by more drastic measures than its present rulers appear to have dreamt of.

For the last decade or so the French Government has been doing its best to induce French peasants, artisans, and small tradesmen and manufacturers to go out to New Caledonia as agricultural and industrial colonists. It has given them free passages, land for nothing, free mining concessions, and even capital to start on, but, in spite all of these advantages and, perhaps, partly because of them, free colonisation has not been a success in New Caledonia. The causes of this failure are not very far to seek, and some of them are exactly the same as those which operate against the success of German colonies.

The first of them is the Functionary. New Caledonia is perhaps the most over-governed place in the whole world. The Australian colonies are beginning to suffer from over-government, the natural result of a too triumphant democracy, but there, as elsewhere under the British flag, it is still possible for the pioneer to fight his own battle for home and fortune against the Spirit of the Wilderness with no more governmental interference than

is necessary to enforce obedience to the law. It doesn't matter of what nationality he is, he succeeds or fails by his own strength or weakness.

In a later chapter I shall describe the most marvellously successful piece of cosmopolitan colonisation that has ever been accomplished, an experiment, the success of which completely bears out all that I am reluctantly obliged to say here against the French system.

From the moment that the Frenchman, whether peasant or artisan, leaves his native land to become a colonist in an oversea French possession he has a functionary in front of him, one on each hand, and one behind him. This is to ensure that he shall go along the dead straight line which governmental wisdom has drawn for him. The man in front prevents him going too fast, and the one behind sees that his footsteps to fortune do not fall behind the regulation pace. When he lands in the colony, his first task is to master more or less imperfectly the vast mass of regulations by which [all his comings and goings are ordered. Within the sphere of action allotted to him everything is already cut and dried. To be original is to transgress the code and to trample on the



official corns of a functionary. Wherefore, he very soon finds that originality is at a heavy discount, and a colonist without originality is of about as much use in a new country as a baby in long clothes. In fact the baby is a more valuable citizen, for he may grow into something which the officially conducted colonist never will.

Then there is that fatal convict question. In the following pages I have shown that in New Caledonia there are three classes into which the criminal population of New Caledonia is rigidly divided. First, there is the *forçat*, or convict proper, the man who has been sentenced to a definite term of transportation, ranging from eight years to life. The second class is composed of *relégués* who have been banished to New Caledonia for life, not for any particular crime, but because, by an accumulation of offences, they have proved themselves to be hopeless criminals, and therefore unfit for civilised society and incapable of bearing the burden of responsibility which is inseparable from freedom. The third class is composed of the *libérés*. We have no counterpart to the *libéré* in our criminal system. The nearest English analogue to him is the convict released on license, but the



only real likeness between them is the fact that they are both responsible for their movements to the police.

In New Caledonia the *forçat* may become a concessionaire and after that a *libéré*, or he may become first a collective and then an individual *libéré*. In the former case he is free to hire himself out for work during the day, but he must return to sleep in barracks. In the latter he is absolutely free within the limits of the colony. Subject to the sanction of the Administration he may engage in any business he pleases.

Many men in this class have done exceedingly well for themselves. Others again have returned to France, of course under government sanction, to present their petition for "rehabilitation." If this is granted they become freemen, their civil rights are restored to them, and they can either settle down in France or return to the colony. As a rule they choose the latter alternative. The keeper of the canteen where I lived at Prony had done this, and had won his way back not only to citizenship, but to universal respect.

The *relégué* has no such hope. He is banished for life and remains a well-cared-for slave of the

government for the rest of his days. In some rare cases he may regain his freedom as a special act of grace, but his civil rights are never restored to him.

These three classes form the real substrata upon which the whole social and official fabric of New Caledonian society rests, and it is into such a soil, supersaturated with crime, that the French Government proposes to transplant freemen and women, and make colonists of them. In other words the free emigrant to New Caledonia must take his wife and children across thirteen thousand miles of ocean and make a home for them in a land where they will inhale the poison-germs of villainy with every breath they breathe. Their servants and their labourers, if they can afford them, will be thieves, swindlers, and assassins. Their sons and daughters will have to work with them, grow up with their children, sit beside them at school, and perhaps some day intermarry with them, for all children of convicts born in New Caledonia are free before the law, and the legal equals of all other children. It is obvious that under such conditions, healthy colonisation is about as impossible as healthy physical life in a colony of lepers.

Many have tried the experiment and have gone back to France richer in experience and poorer in pocket, and with such tales in their mouths as have justly persuaded their fellow-peasants and artisans that their hard, clean, thrifty life in France is infinitely better than State-aided contamination in New Caledonia.

Lastly, there is what I may call the commercial reason for failure, which is of course closely connected with the others. Officialism has strangled initiative, and crime has poisoned the sources of social prosperity ; wherefore in New Caledonia the French govern, but they do not develop. Nine-tenths of the capital invested in the island is in the hands of British and Australian firms, or is owned by foreigners who have become naturalised French subjects. The French have had possession for half a century of one of the richest islands in the world, yet I am only telling the bare truth when I say that a withdrawal of foreign capital would promptly bring the colony to bankruptcy, and that the stoppage of the Australian carrying trade would starve it out in a month. This was clearly proved by the extremities to which nearly all the outlying camps were reduced by the

interruption of the Coast Service during the plague epidemic.

Here, for instance, is one example out of many which might be quoted of the extraordinary ineptitude of the French colonial official in matters of business. An Anglo-French firm located in Sydney obtained a concession for a term of years to import corn, grind it, and sell the flour at a given price, which was about eight shillings per sack higher than the average of Australian prices. The government objected to the price, but yielded on condition that the firm would buy and grind all the corn raised in the colonies. The firm knew perfectly well that all Caledonia would not raise fifty bushels of wheat in as many years, so, of course, they consented, and for the next ten years or so the astute partners will go on selling flour to the government and the citizens at a much higher price than they could import it for themselves from Australia.

The whole trade of Noumea, which is the one trading centre of the island, is practically in English or Australian hands, although several large firms trade under French styles. The first essential of a commercial education in New Caledonia is a

sojourn in Australia, and no French youth has a chance of a good start in a New Caledonian business house unless he can speak and write English. In fact the only people in the colony who do not speak English are the officials of the Administration and the military officers.

During the whole of my wanderings through the convict camps from end to end of the island, I only found one official who could converse intelligently in English, and that was the Director himself; and yet you can go into almost any store or office in Noumea and get what you want by asking for it in English.

New Caledonia may, in short, be fairly described as a French penal colony and a commercial dependency of Australia.

## I

### *SOME FIRST IMPRESSIONS*

AFTER a flying visit to Auckland, our old steam-roller staggered through a southerly buster into Sydney Heads on Christmas Eve, and it was then that I began to make acquaintance with the Microbe of the Black Death.

We had got alongside the wharf at Circular Quay. On the other side of the jetty a white-painted Messageries mail-boat was being moored. If Sydney had only known the terrible cargo which she carried, Sydney would have seen her sunk a thousand fathoms deep rather than let her touch Australian soil. She was the *Pacifique*, the ship I was to cross to New Caledonia in, and the Black Death was a passenger on board her. It was many days more before I learnt the how and the why of this—after I had walked in the same streets, lived in the same houses, and sat at the same table



with the Spectre. I had also seen his material reality. This was what it looked like.

A lot of little circular globules, flattened in the centre, some red and some white, were floating in a greyish-white liquid under the microscope. Among them were some tiny dark, wriggling things swimming in the fluid and running their heads against the edges of the white globules. They were plague-microbes in blood-serum. If they got inside the white corpuscles the person to whom that blood belonged would have a very good chance of dying the Black Death. If not, he would be very ill, but would probably live, as I did.

The newspapers had come on board, and I was having a farewell cocktail in the Doctor's cabin, a cosy little snuggery, which by this time contained many pleasant memories for me.

"There's bubonic plague at Noumea," said he; "and they seem to have it pretty bad, too. Of course you won't think of going while anything like that's messing around?"

Now I loved the Doctor because, in addition to his social qualities and medical skill, he possessed the art of making a cocktail which was an entirely delightful antidote to his medicine.

I confess that I didn't like the news, but I made bold to reply :

"Of course I shall. Do you suppose I've come fifteen thousand miles to get into that place to be scared by ——? Anyhow, I suppose it's only among the Kanakas?"

"My dear fellow, bubonic plague's a mighty good thing to stop away from," he said, with unwonted seriousness.

"And therefore all the more interesting."

"Well, if you will go, so-long, and don't get it. If you do, in a place like that you'll have about one chance in five of getting back."

Ten days afterwards I steamed into the lovely harbour of Noumea, the Malta of the Pacific, which England lost by about three hours one morning nearly fifty years ago. But the adventures of H.M.S. *Dodderer* will be a twist in another yarn.

Even if we had not known that the terrible Black Death had come to Noumea, the least observant of us would have asked :

"What is the matter with this place?"

A couple of dozen steamers and sailing-ships were laid up, and a ship out of work is about as forlorn a spectacle as a deserted workhouse.

The ships that were in work were all flying Yellow Jack—that spectre in bunting which followed me across the world till I bade it, I hope, a last farewell on the quay at Marseilles. Steam-launches, too, were flying it, dodging backwards and forwards between the ships and the shore. They were patrolling to stop all unauthorised communication. One of them ran alongside. Other boats, containing friends of passengers, kept at a very respectful distance.

“Five fresh cases to-day; two deaths, one a white man,” were almost the first words I heard at the gangway. Then the Doctor’s words came home to me in a somewhat chill fashion. At Sydney it was only the news. This was the ugly reality. We began to look at each other, and especially at the people from the shore.

Which of us would be first? You could see the unspoken question in every one’s eyes. People who had been friends on the passage didn’t care to shake hands now. We looked at the lovely landscape in front of us, the white-walled, grey-roofed town, nestling under tall, feathery palms, and the flamboyants blazing with crimson blossom, at the foot of the densely wooded mountains, and

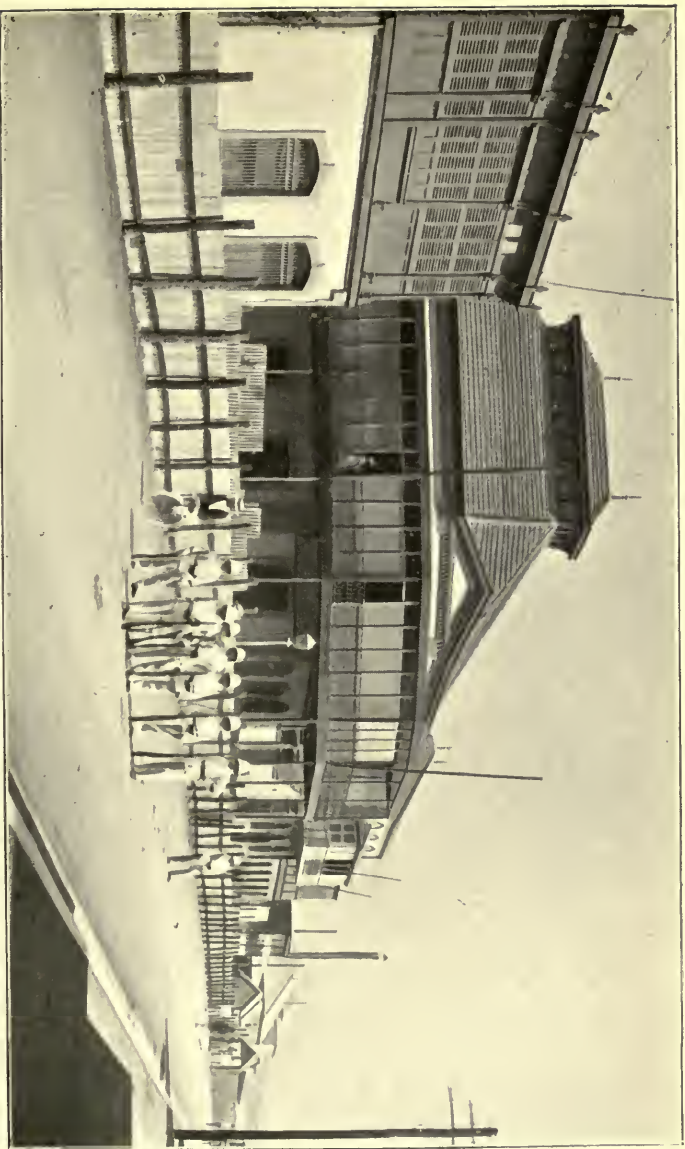
it seemed strangely out of the order of things that this demon which has devastated the world for ages should have chosen so fair a spot from which to send that dread message forth to men and doctors :

“I am here, in spite of all your science. Kill me if you can. Meanwhile, pay me my toll of life.”

It was dark before we had passed the doctor and got ashore. The first visible sign of the terrible presence was a long wall of corrugated iron cutting off that portion of the town which lies along the wharves from the rest. There were openings in this, and each was guarded by a sentry with fixed bayonet, but more than twenty days before the Spectre had slipped past the sentries and slain a white man. Even now it was standing by the bedside of two white girls.

The Kanakas and Tonkinois didn't seem to matter so much. But white people—that was a family matter to all of us. This seems uncharitable, but it is none the less true.

When I found the place that I was to sleep in, I began to see, or, rather, to smell, the reason why the Spectre had crossed the barriers. Noumea has



The Plague Area at Noumea. Offices of the Messageries Maritimes, with Sentries in front.





a magnificent water-supply. Fresh water flows constantly from the mountains down through the stone channels on each side of the streets ; but its sanitation is about as rudimentary as that of a Kaffir village.

When I went to bed I shut the long windows opening on to the balcony to keep the smell out. I also shut in the heat and some odd millions of mosquitos, any of which, according to popular belief, might have had thousands of microbes concealed about its person. As a matter of fact they hadn't ; but they got their own work in all the same.

I stood it for nearly an hour, and then I concluded that even the smell was preferable to suffocation, so I opened the windows and went out on the balcony to scratch and say things to the accompaniment of the song of many vocal insects. The next morning I went down into the yard to cool my wounds in a corrugated iron bathroom, which, with true French colonial forethought, had been built within two yards of an open cesspool. A shower-bath in tropical countries is usually a luxury as well as a necessity. In Noumea it was only a necessity.

When I set out for my first stroll round Noumea

the morning after my arrival the sun was shining out of a sky of unflecked blue. A delicious breeze was flowing down the mountain-sides. The scent of fruit and flowers was everywhere atoning for the stench of that backyard. I took in long breaths of the sweet, soft air, and began to wonder whether that black Spectre really was haunting such a paradise as this.

Then I turned into the Place des Cocotiers, which is to Noumea what the Champs Elysées are to Paris—a broad square shaded by blazing flamboyants and flanked by rows of coco-palms. The next moment I saw a long, four-wheeled, white-curtained vehicle being driven rapidly through it. It was the ambulance, and inside it lay some stricken wretch. Who—yes, who was it? A question of some significance to one who might have had to say “here!” to the dread summons before the next sun rose.

I went under the verandah of the Hotel de France, which fronts the square, and ordered a *limonade*, so that I might ask the news. Yes, it was the ambulance, and its occupant was one of the white girls. In three days she was to be the first white bride of the Black Death. It was rumoured

that there were six new cases that morning, but the Sanitary Commission very wisely only reported two "suspected" cases and one death. If they had told the truth for a few days more there would have been panic, and panic is the best—or worst—helpmeet of disease, especially in a place like Noumea.

From the hotel I wandered along the shady sidewalks of the broad streets, and presently found myself in a quarter of the town which looked as if it had been bombarded. The houses were wrecked and roofless. Some of them were smouldering still, and some were cold, skeleton ruins. It was here that the Black Death had found its first victims. They were only Kanakas and Tonkinois, so their families had been cleared out, and their houses and belongings burnt.

Farther on up the hill leading to the military reservation I saw all that was left of what had once been a pretty villa standing in its own grounds, a garden such as one sees only in the tropics. This had been the house of the first white victim, a young fellow of splendid physique, who had fought the Demon through three weeks of torture, dying by inches in multiplying horrors unspeakable.

Later on the Demon was more merciful, because he struck harder and killed quicker. In a few weeks it was to be a matter of hours rather than of days.

I learnt afterwards that, although the Sanitary Commission had burnt the house down, they had allowed the furniture to be sold by public auction. The same authority permitted the traveller by sea to take any sort of luggage he liked on board the steamer, but would not allow even a package of clean linen to be forwarded from one port to another unless it was in the possession of its owner. Nail it up in a box and it could go, but as personal effects—no. Later on the Demon took his revenge for this foolishness. He laid his hands on the Chief of the Commission, and killed him in thirty-six hours.

That night I dined at the club, the Cercle de Noumea, an institution which is devoted to eating and drinking during the day, and to poker and baccarat during the night.

There was only one subject of conversation among the Frenchmen round the long table—*la Peste*.

During the plague-time in Bombay it cost drinks

round to mention the word in white society, but in Noumea every one, doctors and laymen alike, talked unrestrainedly of it. The doctors told of the new "cases," enlarged on symptoms, and described experiments in detail which made the laymen mostly sick, and nearly all frightened. Which is one point of difference between English and French ways of looking at ugly things.

A day or two after, when the name of the Demon had become familiar to my ears, and had, therefore, lost some of its terrors—I suppose I really was quite as frightened as anybody else—I noticed that a man feeling furtively under his armpits was looked at with suspicion, and a man seen limping in the street was left to walk alone.

One morning I got up feeling rather seedy. It may have been the mosquitos, or the heat, or the last French cigar overnight. It is a true saying that a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client, and that a man who is his own doctor has a still bigger fool for a patient; but by this time I had heard enough of *la Peste* in Noumea to convince me that I had to take the latter risk into my own hands. If I had described my symptoms to a doctor I should have been "under



observation " in the hospital within an hour. After that the date of my coming out would have been a very uncertain one, so I smoked the mosquitos out of my bedroom, took some chlorodyne, and went to bed. It is bad to take opiates, but it is a great deal worse to lie awake in a plague-smitten town and wonder whether or not you've got it.

The next day I saw a coffin carried out of a house. That night the house was pulled down, and the ruins burnt, but the day after that, as though in mockery of every precaution taken, the Demon showed himself in a new and deadlier form.

A great cleaning-up had been going on all this time, just as it was in Sydney later on. The filth-accumulations of years were being cleared out. A white man, very much down on his luck, took a job with the Kanakas and convicts who were cleaning out the basement of a store in which dead rats had been found. The others had their mouths and noses covered with cloths steeped in corrosive sublimate, but he wasn't afraid of any blanked plague, and so he went in without.

He happened to stir up some dust out of which he disinterred the corpse of a rat. He inhaled



some of the dust. The little black wriggly thing that I had seen under the microscope got into his lungs, and assisted in the change of the venous into the arterial blood. In six hours that man was dead. The pulmonary form of the Black Death is perhaps the most swiftly killing of all diseases.

After this the corrugated iron fence round the wharves came down, and the sentries went back to barracks. The enemy had passed them, unseen and unchallenged. Every gust of wind which raised a cloud of dust in the street might carry death, and sometimes did.

You might, for example, walk through one of these clouds on your way to dinner. Your appetite would not be quite as good as usual. After dinner you would feel headachy and sick, and, being disinclined to walk home,—a very bad symptom, by the way,—you would call a cab and be driven there. The next day you would have a drive in the ambulance, after which your fate lay on the knees of the gods. In the particular case here referred to the matter was decided in four days.

It was little wonder that the microbe was thriving apace in this outwardly lovely place, for dirt,

disease, and death are a trinity found ever hand in hand. Just *en passant*, I may say here that my excellent landlady who, I am sorry to say, died of the plague soon after I left her hospitable roof, subsequently confided to me that among her guests there were some who had not had a bath for three weeks. Of course there was no law to make them wash, but I think that in a tropical country in which the Black Death has taken up its abode the penalty for not bathing, at least once a day, should be delivery to the tender mercies of the local fire brigade, with permission to squirt to taste.

## II

### *SOME SOCIAL SIDELIGHTS*

MY first official business in the colony was, of course, to write to the Governor acquainting him with the fact of my arrival. I did this with considerable misgivings, for both at Sydney and on the boat, I had heard the evil rumour that in consequence of the plague the Government of New Caledonia had decided to close the prisons. This meant that the convicts who had been hired out to work in the mines and elsewhere would be recalled to the prisons and the camps, and that all communication would be severed between them and the outer world until the epidemic was over.

Now I carried credentials from the Ministry of the Colonies in Paris, which is to New Caledonia what the Russian Ministry of Justice was to Siberia, and these, under ordinary circumstances, authorised me to have every prison door in the island opened to me. But M. Albert Décras knew nothing about

the coming visitation when he gave them to me, and the Governor would have been well within his powers if he had answered my letter by expressing "his infinite regret that exceptional circumstances made it impossible for him to act under the instructions of the Ministry during the present disastrous epidemic, etc."

In this case my mission would have been brought to nought, and I should have travelled fifteen thousand miles for the privilege of sojourning an indefinite time in a plague-stricken town. It was three days before I got an answer, and during that time I allayed my anxieties by making a closer acquaintance with Noumea.

Through the kindness of the Earl of Dunmore, who was then acting as Administrator of one of the greatest mining enterprises in New Caledonia, and a member of the Municipal Council with whom I had travelled from Sydney, I was made a guest of the Cercle. Only the most exclusive aristocracy of Noumea breakfast and dine at home. The rest—officials, merchants, and professional men—knock off work at eleven, having begun about six, breakfast at half-past, and then play or sleep till three.

At six everything, except the hotels and cafés, shut up; then comes a drive or a ride, tennis or a sail in the bay, then dinner, followed by cards and drinks till midnight—and of such is the daily life of the capital of New Caledonia. I learnt afterwards that this delightfully situated little town is also one of the wickedest spots on earth, but of that I shall have more to say hereafter.

Socially, Noumea struck me as being somewhat cramped. Its society is composed of educated, highly trained, and, in the main, well-mannered men, living a little life among themselves, and being crushed into smallness by the very narrowness of their environment. They were a thousand miles from anywhere. Their only immediate connection with the outer world was the cable to Sydney, controlled by the all-powerful Administration, which published and suppressed whatever it pleased.

There were the monthly Messagerie mails, and a few odd traders, now mostly laid up in the harbour flying the Yellow Jack. Every night the same men met and discussed the same subjects, the chief of which was *la Peste*. Every day the same men went to the same duties, the same women

discussed the same gossip and the same scandal. Every night the same men and women met in the Place des Cocotiers, under its swaying palms and flaming flamboyants, and listened to the same music—which, by the way, they will never listen to again.

I had gone to Noumea full up to the roots of my hair with the utterly erroneous notions which I had picked up from books and conversations. The books appear to have been written mostly by returned *déportés* or *communards* who had been banished in '71 and '72, and allowed to return to France after the general amnesty. The people with whom I had conversed had apparently got their knowledge from somewhat similar sources, but all agreed in representing New Caledonia as a second Tasmania, or Norfolk Island, where all the uncivilised barbarities of our own transportation system had been prolonged to the end of the nineteenth century.

Its population consisted of a vast horde of convicts, the most abandoned and bloodthirsty wretches on earth, ground down into hopeless slavery by the irresistible and unpitying strength of an official engine called the Penitentiary Administration. The



officials were a set of soulless gaolers in whose natures every spark of humanity had been quenched by the performance of their pitiless task. The surplus of the population consisted of half-tamed natives and a few thousand *libérés*, or ticket-of-leave men, any one of whom would knock you on the head or stick a knife into you for a couple of francs.

Finally I was regarded in Paris as rather madder than the average Englishman for wanting to go to such a God-forsaken place, being neither a convict who had to go nor an official who wanted to earn a comfortable *retraite* and save up the wherewithal to purchase rentes on which to spend the balance of his days in that peace and quiet which is the domestic heaven to which all good Frenchmen look forward.

Now this is what I actually saw of convict-life in Noumea before I had passed the prison gates for the first time. I had eaten my second dinner at the Cercle, and Lord Dunmore, taking pity on my isolation, said :

“The convict-band is playing in the square to-night, suppose we go and get some seats?”

“The convict what?” I said, harking back

mentally to the rigid English system, and trying to picture to myself an English convict blowing a cornet.

"It's what they call here the *Musique de la Transportation*. It's quite an institution in Noumea. I don't suppose there's anything like it anywhere else."

So I went, feeling verily a stranger in a strange land.

It was an absolutely perfect tropical night. The moon was getting up over the eastern end of the *Chaine Centrale*, a ridge of mountains which runs through Caledonia from north-east to south-west; the cafés along the top of the square were glittering with light; a deliciously cool breeze was blowing down from the mountains through the trees.

Little groups of people, mostly clad in white, were sitting on chairs about the lawns, and others were strolling slowly round and round the square and across the paths which radiated from the big kiosk in the centre. There were pretty costumes and brilliant uniforms, stars and medals and all the rest of it, and the one finishing tropical touch that was needful was added by wandering bands of laughing Kanakas with gaudy waistcloths and

fantastic headgear, big, luminous eyes, and teeth that gleamed whitely as they laughed.

Saving these last there was nothing that would have been incongruous with one of those delightful portions of outdoor Paris where "l'on s'amuse." The shadow of the Black Death seemed to have been lifted for the time, and as for crime and convicts—well, presently up one of the avenues through the flamboyants there appeared a line of grey-clad figures carrying musical instruments. There were twenty-five of them all told.

They sauntered up to the band-stand laughing and chatting as though they hadn't a care in the wide world. Possibly they had very few; fewer certainly than the peasant toiling his sixteen hours a day for a bare living in far-away France.

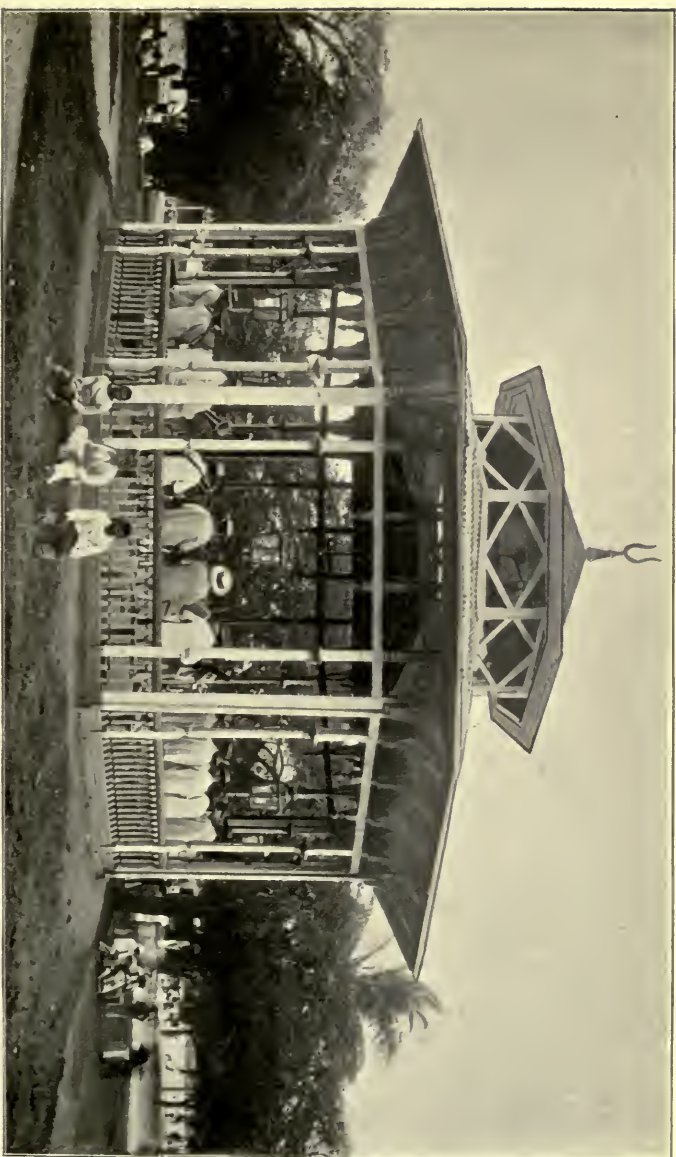
They were guarded by a very bored-looking surveillant, who carried in a sling a revolver which he was not allowed to use unless one of his charges struck him first!

The gentlemen of the orchestra took their places, and a short, thick-set man, with a clever, but most unpleasant face, went into the middle and looked around with an air of command, which reminded me oddly of the preliminary gestures of other

conductors of very different orchestras. There was a little tuning-up, then the conductor tapped his music-stand, waved his baton of authority, and forthwith the sweet strains of the Intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana" began to float out through the drowsy hush of the tropical evening.

There is really only one word which could describe the scene, and that is bizarre. Take five-and-twenty musically inclined convicts out of an English prison, put them into the Western Gardens at Earl's Court on a warm July evening and you would have something like it, but not quite. At Earl's Court the convict-band would be stared at as a curiosity, but people would probably keep at a respectful distance from the band-stand, especially if there was only one tired-looking warder to keep guard over the musical criminals.

But in Noumea no one, save, perhaps, myself, looked twice at the enclosure which contained an amount of assorted villainy and potential violence, rapine, and sudden death as you could find the wide world over in a similar space. There were men from every station of life—soldiers, priests, lawyers, politicians, financiers, and men who had



The Convict Band playing in the Kiosk in the Place des Cocotiers, Nouméa.





once belonged to the Golden Youth of France—inside the kiosk of the Musique de la Transportation.

Collectively they had committed every crime, from forgery to outrages for which civilised speech has no name. The *chef d'orchestre*, for example, was the man who, a few years ago, sent a thrill of horror through the world by cutting the heart out of a man whom he believed to be his rival in his wife's affections, getting her to cook it as a sheep's heart, dining off it with her, and then telling her what she had been eating. In addition to being a talented musician he was also a very clever painter who has won quite a reputation in the island.

And yet, while this unspeakable scoundrel was controlling with his baton the flood of sweet sounds which flowed out from the kiosk over the moonlight-spangled lawns, the most respectable people in Noumea were sitting about in chairs smoking and chatting; young men and maidens were wandering about among the trees; and little children were playing round the grassy slope on which the band-stand stood, taking no more notice of these human hyenas than if they had been the

most respectable musicians that ever wore long hair and swallow-tailed coats.

The performance finished, as usual, with "La Marseillaise." I stood up and took off my helmet. Then I put it on again and sat down somewhat suddenly. Not another person rose; not another head was uncovered. For all the notice that was taken of it, the National Hymn of the Republic might as well have been "Mrs. 'Enery 'Awkins,"—which did not strike me as a particularly good thing for France generally.

When the performance was over the artists gathered up their instruments, lolled out on to the path in front of the kiosk, and shuffled into a sort of double line. The weary warder counted them in a languid fashion, right-about-faced them, and gave the order to march. They shambled away through the gaily dressed crowds in the square. No one even turned to look at them, and I, who had seen a party of English convicts on their way to work through a public road, ranged up with their faces to the wall because a break-load of excursionists was passing by, wondered greatly.

The Musique de la Transportation is now,

happily for the credit of Noumea, a thing of the past. The pampered artists got to think themselves indispensable to the gaiety of the town. So one night, having collected more surreptitious coppers than usual, they halted on their way to barracks, bought wine and brandy, and told the warder to go and report them if he dared. He did dare, and the next day the Director of the Administration published a brief edict which abolished them as musicians for ever.

The next morning, soon after coffee, a white-helmeted, gorgeously uniformed gendarme presented himself at the door of the Hotel Gaquon with a request to see "Monsieur Griffitte." An Englishman or German official would have saluted. He took his helmet off, bowed, and handed me a letter from the Governor appointing an interview for the next day. I went to breakfast at the club as usual, and before the meal was over I found that everybody knew of the sending of that letter. I had been an interloper before, and an Englishman at that. Now I was a guest, the guest of the omnipotent Ministry upon whose will the fate of every official in Caledonia depended.

That was a morning of introductions, and I was

surprised to find how many friends I had in Noumea.

The Governor's offices at Noumea are in a corner of the lovely grounds in the midst of which his official residence stands. It was a little, unpretentious, two-storey building, wooden built, and with a verandah giving on to the street.

I gave my card to a collarless clerk, who appeared to be getting very hot over the task of sorting a few papers. He sent it up to His Excellency, and asked me "to give myself the trouble to sit down," which I did.

Soldiers, civilians, gendarmes, and convict messengers kept dropping in every now and then to deliver messages or letters, or have a chat with somebody by way of beguiling the tedium of official hours, and then a half-caste boy came down with my card and requested me to give myself the further trouble of going upstairs. I don't know whether this was another official, but if he was his uniform consisted of a pair of trousers and a shirt, a linen jacket which hadn't seen the laundry for some time, and a pair of canvas deck-shoes.

I followed him upstairs. He opened the door



The Town and Harbour of Noumea. Across the bay are the Barracks and the Military Reservation, which no civilian may enter without authority. On the peninsula to the right are the stations of the *libérés collectifs*.





without any ceremony, and I found myself in the presence of the Governor—a man of medium French height, with a square, close-cropped head, moustache, and close-clipped beard. If the chin had matched the forehead it would have been a strong face, but it did not.

I learnt afterwards that his Excellency Monsieur Feuillet is a man of decided anti-English tastes; but for all that he received me very cordially. He had already received notice of my coming from the French Government, and expressed himself as willing to do anything to further my mission. As a matter of fact, this came to countersigning my credentials from the Minister of Colonies and writing a letter to the Director of the Administration. I then shook hands, and saw Monsieur Paul Feuillet no more save from a distance.

Then I went to the Direction, and in a few minutes I was sitting in a half-darkened, comfortable room, with double doors, through which no sound could penetrate. This room is the centre of the system which really controls the destinies of bond and free throughout New Caledonia. On the other side of an ample writing-table sat a square-headed, strong-jawed man of about five-and-thirty,

with close-cropped hair, and moustache and shaven chin à l'Anglais.

This was M. Edouard Telle, Director of the Penitentiary Administration for New Caledonia and Dependencies, the strongest, politest, and most friendly Frenchman I have ever met.

He is supreme chief of an army of commandants, surveillants, and jailors, whose duty it is to keep watch and ward over between ten thousand and twelve thousand convicts, *relégues* and *libérés*—terms which I have already explained.

He is absolutely independent of the Governor, who cannot even employ convicts on public works without his permission. He is responsible to no one but the Minister of Colonies and the President of the Republic, and they are many a long thousand miles away. With the stroke of a pen he could instantly stop all convict labour throughout the colony, and so bring its principal industries to a standstill. It was he, too, and not the Governor, who could have issued that ukase which would have closed the prisons and turned my long journey into a wild-geese chase.

But, instead of this, he took quite as much trouble with me as if I had been an inspector



In the Harbour, Noumea.



sent out by the French Government, rather than a wandering Englishman who was only there on sufferance. He took the utmost pains to find out exactly what I wanted ; he mapped out my journeys for me ; gave me special passes authorising me to inspect all the prisons and camps *en détail*—which is a very different thing to the ordinary, but still rarely bestowed, visitor's pass.

He addressed a circular letter to the commandants, enjoining them to do everything to help me ; and, not content with this, he telegraphed to each prison and camp so that conveyances might be ready for me. At the same time, when I suggested fixing dates, he replied :

“ No, Mr. Griffith, go when you please. I wish you to see the establishments exactly as they are always, and not as they might be if they were got ready for you. When you have seen them come back and tell me what you think of them. From what you have told me of your English prisons ” —this was at the end of a somewhat long conversation—“ your opinion will be most valuable to me.”

Then I thanked him, and mentioned the delicate subject of photographs, and his good nature

and indulgence once more proved equal to the strain.

"Photograph anything you please," he said, "inside or outside the prisons ; but I shall ask you to remember that good English rule of yours about photographing individual prisoners."

Of course, I agreed to this, and left the Direction well at ease and wondering more than ever at the misconceptions I had managed to form of the Caledonian prison system. I frankly admit that I had expected to be received with suspicion and reserve, perhaps even with hostility.

Instead of this the most powerful man in the colony had greeted me with perfect cordiality and frankness, and had taken more trouble to make my tour a success than I should certainly have expected a good many English officials to take.

During another interview with M. Telle, before I had yet seen the inside of a Caledonian prison, we both managed to astonish each other not a little. The Director is a criminologist and the son of a criminologist, who was Director before him, but he was sufficiently French only to have studied the continental systems.

Therefore he was about as much surprised when



I told him that the cat and the birch were still used in English prisons ; that English prisoners ate and slept in absolute solitude and worked in silence, as I was when he told me that, in this land of supposed horrors not only had all corporal punishment been abolished, but that the surveillants were not permitted even to lay a hand upon a prisoner, except in actual self-defence ; that cells and silence were only used as punishments ; and when he added that the better-behaved prisoners might smoke and drink wine, I confess that I was almost shocked. All this, however, with other strange things, I was soon to see for myself.

I dined that night, as usual, at the club, in a more contented frame of mind than heretofore, for now the omnipotent Administration had spoken, and I was free of the colony—free to go where I pleased, to see what I liked, and, within the limits of the law, do as I liked.

No man might say me nay. All the prison-houses in the land must give up their secrets to me. In short, I had in my pocket the keys of every cell door in New Caledonia.

Under these circumstances I naturally found things much pleasanter than before. I listened

with equanimity to a local editor's remarks on the war news—which he had been spending the day in mangling—and even the military doctors' descriptions of the new plague cases and the ghastly operations which they had just been performing with those nail-stained hands of theirs did not seem quite so loathsome as before.

There was, by the way, another peculiarity of New Caledonian social life to which I was already becoming accustomed. There are practically no free servants in the colony. Male or female, they are either convicts or ex-convicts, and it was no uncommon thing to have your knife and fork laid for you at breakfast or dinner by a hand which had stuck a knife into somebody else, or to take your food from hands that had poisoned.

I admit that I did not like the idea at first, but in time I got accustomed to it, just as I did later on to being shaved by a most amiable and accomplished murderer, and having my bed made up by a lady who had cut her child's throat. It is, in fact, the fashion in New Caledonia to have murderers for servants. As a distinguished resident said to me :

‘You see, the assassins are reliable. They are

the aristocrats of the place. They don't condescend to smaller crimes. In fact, they would be absolutely insulted if they were accused of a theft, at least, the good murderers would, and as for killing you, they would never dream of it. Why should they? Besides, they know perfectly well that there wouldn't be the remotest chance of escape for them."

This I found afterwards to be the cold-drawn truth. Fewer after-crimes are committed in New Caledonia by those who are sent there for assassination than by minor criminals. Later on I shall have some curious information to give on this subject.

### III

#### *ILE NOU*

**H**ALF-PAST five on a glorious tropical morning. The sun was still hidden behind the green, rugged mountains which gained its name for New Caledonia ; but it was still high enough for the shadows to be melting out of the valleys ; for the grey roofs and white walls of the town to be glimmering among the dark masses of foliage ; and for the smooth waters of the lovely harbour to light up with foregleams of the glory of sunrise.

A little beyond the northern end of the plague-infected area, with its corrugated iron walls and its white-clad sentries, I found a collection of pretty buildings, with neat little gardens round them. They were the offices of the executive police, and when I had passed through them I found myself on a short, board, wooden, T-shaped quay—the Quai de la Transportation—which is used solely for the purposes of the Administration.

Leading down to this is one of the only two railways of New Caledonia on which a locomotive travels. It is quite a toy affair, with a gauge of about twenty inches, and a length of perhaps five hundred yards ; but the engine puffed around just as busily, and seemed just as proud of itself, as if it had been hauling the Empire State Express. It runs from the wharves to the head of the quay, and its function just then was carrying ballast for a new road.

It is a curious fact that the French have had possession of New Caledonia for nearly half a century, and yet the only railway by which passengers can travel is one on which the cars are drawn by convicts, concerning which more hereafter.

I presented my credentials at the *douanerie*, where my cameras were viewed with considerable suspicion until the all-compelling documents had been read. After that, I suppose, they would have almost let me take a Maxim gun on to the island. Then they were noted and handed back to me with a polite "*Très bien, monsieur*. The *canot* will start in a quarter of an hour. If you will give your apparatus to this officer he will see it safe in the boat."

A polite surveillant stepped up, touched his helmet, and took them from me. Then I lit a pipe and strolled up and down the quay to enjoy my strange surroundings.

I had seen hundreds of convicts in England working both within and without the prison walls; working in grim, joyless silence, surrounded by equally silent, rifle-armed warders, and never a prisoner moving without one of these at his heels. Here it was difficult to believe that I was in Prisonland at all save that the other occupants of the quay were wearing two very different uniforms, and that I was the only one *en civile*.

The surveillants were dressed in spotless white—the official washing-bill of New Caledonia must be something enormous—their white helmets bore a silver badge, the chief figure in which was a glorified representation of the now forbidden rod, with the letters “A. P.” (Administration Pénitentiare). Their rank was shown by *galons*, a sort of stripe worn on the cuff of the left sleeve. This was of blue cloth with silver braid—the lines of braid served the same purpose as stripes do with us. For instance, the French equivalent for “two stripes” is “*à deux galons*.”



The uniform of the others was chiefly conspicuous for its ugliness and utility—a pair of trousers and a jumper of light grey canvas cloth, with a vest underneath, and a very broad-brimmed straw hat, without a ribbon. No convict in Caledonia is allowed a ribbon on his hat. Some had stout, undressed brogues, and some were barefoot. They were without exception extremely ugly and fairly hearty.

A good many of them were smoking, and this rather got on my nerves, for I kept on asking myself what would happen to an English prison official if he saw a convict take out a cigarette and go and ask another one for a light? But here surveillants strolled about puffing their own cigarettes—making me wonder again what would happen to an English warder smoking on duty?—and not worrying particularly over anything.

At the same time, there was no lack of discipline of its kind, though it was not what we should call discipline in England. Still, the convicts worked hard and regularly; harder, indeed, than I have ever seen English convicts work.

Their task was loading the *canots* and the steam-launch with provisions for the great prison on the

other side of the harbour ; and they went at it steadily and in excellent order until it was finished, scarcely needing a word of direction from the surveillants.

As I watched them I thought of the quiet-spoken, square-headed despot with whom I had been talking a day or two before. These men, like hundreds of others that I saw, evidently knew him, if only by repute.

Presently the surveillant who had taken my cameras came and saluted and told me that the *canot* was ready. I got in, and found it manned by twelve convicts, who were protected by an awning stretched from stem to stern. They were chatting and smoking when we got in, and my conductor, thinking perhaps to impress the Englishman with a sense of French discipline, ordered them to be silent.

They stopped talking for five minutes while they got under weigh, then, like a lot of school-boys, they began again, whereupon the surveillant rebuked them again. "*Silence, je vous dis !*" said he in his most authoritative tone ; and they obliged him more or less for the rest of the passage.

I must say that they rowed very well, and with a vigour which betokened good nourishment.

They looked at me with smiling curiosity. They evidently knew pretty well all about me by this time—Heaven and the mysterious “*loi du baigne*” only know how ; and I daresay they wondered why any one should have taken the trouble to come across the world just to make their acquaintance.

I was received on the quay at Ile Nou by an officer—a chief warder, as we should call him in England—who took me to the Commandant’s house. *En route* I found that Ile Nou, about which I had read such terrible stories, is a very pleasant little settlement, composed of white houses and shady streets, at the foot of a hill on which the great prison buildings stand.

In a few minutes another illusion was shattered. I admit that I expected to find the Commandant of the greatest prison in Caledonia a semi-military despot in a braided uniform, boots and spurs, with a sword, and, possibly, a revolver, to say nothing of fiercely waxed moustache and imperial.

Instead of this I found a mild-mannered, grey-haired gentleman of about sixty, clad in a *négligé* white suit, with no sign of official rank about him save a silver-embroidered blue band round the left cuff of his coat, which reminded me rather

oddly of the band that a British policeman wears when he is on duty.

He was drinking his early coffee and receiving reports, which were noted by a convict clerk at another table. He gave me a cup of coffee, and ordered the carriage to be got ready. Meanwhile, he dropped his reports and began to ask me about my journey, my impressions of New Caledonia, and so on.

Presently a surveillant came in to say that the carriage was ready. We got in, and a couple of well-bred, well-fed horses pulled us at a good pace up the winding road, until our convict driver halted in front of a big black iron door in a long white-washed wall. As the Chief Surveillant put his key into the lock the Commandant said to me, with a smile :

“You will be the first Englishman who has ever passed this gate.”

“*Mais pardon, Commandant,*” said the surveillant, as he threw the door open. “There have been two others, but they did not come across the world to see the prison, and they stayed a good deal longer than monsieur would care to do.”

“No doubt,” said I ; and with that we crossed the Threshold of Lost Footsteps.

As the door swung to behind me I found myself in a long rectangular courtyard, one side of which was almost filled by a row of long, white buildings fronting endways on to the court, with a door at the end and small windows along the side.

At the further end, to the right hand, there was another door in the high, white wall, of which I was to learn the use later on, for the quadrangle which we were crossing is to the convicts of Ile Nou what the Place de la Roquette was lately to the Parisians—the Field of Blood, the Place of Execution.

The Commandant agologised for not being able to invite me to assist at the spectacle, as there was no patient available. I should see shortly a *forçat* awaiting trial for murder, but it would be some time before he could be tried, and then there would be the ratification of the sentence.

I should, of course, have assisted at such a spectacle if it had been possible ; but I had the advantage of hearing a simple, but none the less graphic, description of an execution at Ile Nou from the lips of one who had more than once been an eye-witness of the dread ceremony ; and this I will reproduce hereafter not only because of its



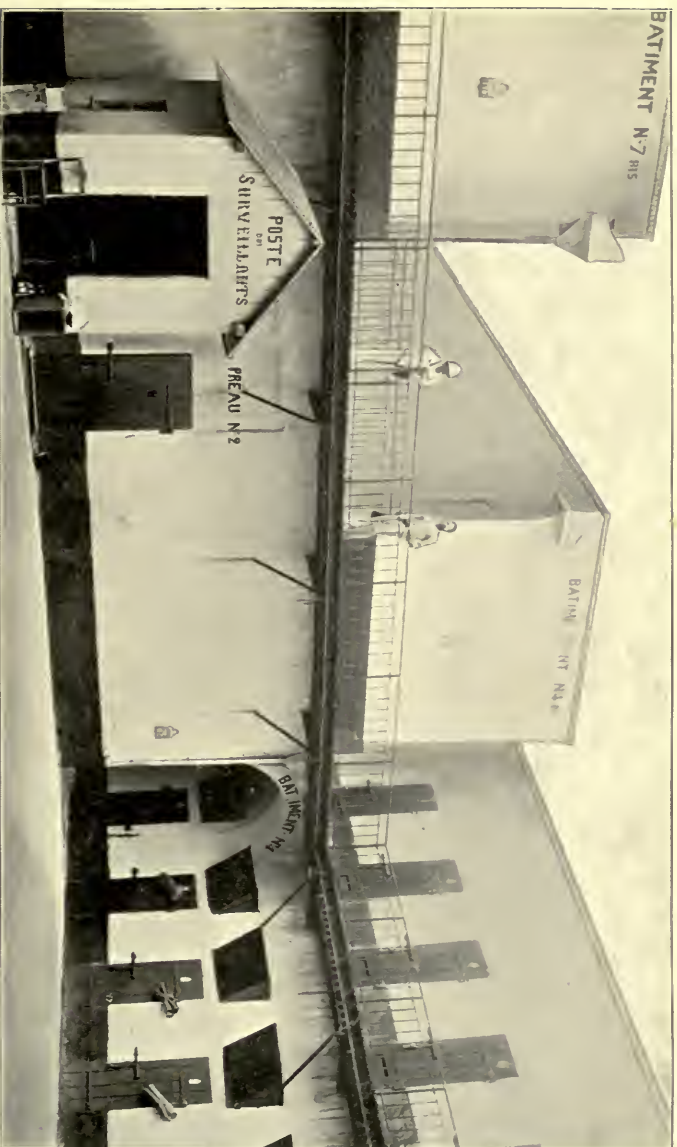
dramatic interest, but because it is so absolutely different from anything ever heard of in England.

After we had inspected the *cases*, or dormitories, where the convicts of the third, or lowest, class sleep on sloping wooden shelves, with one foot manacled to an iron bar running the whole length of the long room, we went through other gates and walls into the central prison—the Prison Cellulaire—the heart and centre of the vast organisation.

Here I might have fancied myself in a somewhat old-fashioned English prison. Here there were no convicts smoking cigarettes or chatting at their work while their guardians smoked theirs and chatted also. The chill of silence cut down through the warmth of the tropic morning as the iron gates clashed to, and the heavy bolts shot back. Underfoot, black stone or cement pavement; around, white walls and two tiers of little black doors, the upper fronted by stone balconies and iron rails.

On the ground floor we went through several cells into which light as well as air was admitted, and here I found convicts who had been sentenced to various terms of hard labour with solitary confinement. This, with reduction of diet, is the first





The Inner Court of the Central Prison, Ile Nou.

The Cachots Noirs are to the right. The Condemned Cells are in the Upper Gallery above the Archway.



degree of punishment inflicted on an idle or disorderly prisoner. It was about equal to the ordinary hard labour of English prisons.

Then, after a look into the two little exercise-yards, we mounted to the second storey. Here I noticed that the cells had no windows and no gratings in the doors. Some of them had little cards affixed to them.

I went and read a couple of these ; they contained the names of the prisoners, their first sentence, their subsequent offences, and their present sentences.

In these two cases it was "ten years' solitary confinement in the dark." Then I knew that I was standing in front of the terrible Cachot Noir, or Black Cell—that engine of mental murder which the sentimentalism of French deputies, some of them amnestied *communards*, has substituted for the infinitely more merciful lash.

I asked for the doors to be opened. My polite Commandant demurred for a moment. It was not *réglementaire*. The Cachots Noirs were never opened except at stated intervals,—once every thirty days, for an hour's exercise and medical inspection,—but the wording of my credentials was explicit, and so the doors were opened.

Out of the corner of one came something in human shape, crouching forward, rubbing its eyes and blinking at the unaccustomed light. It had been three and a half years in that horrible hole, about three yards long, by one and a half broad. I gave him a feast of sunshine and outer air by taking his place for a few minutes.

After the first two or three the minutes lengthened out into hours. I had absolutely no sense of sight. I was as blind as though I had been born without eyes. The blackness seemed to come down on me like some solid thing and drive my straining eyes back into my head. It was literally darkness that could be felt, for I felt it, and the silence was like the silence of upper space.

When the double doors opened again the rays of light seemed to strike my eyes like daggers. The criminal whose place I had taken had a record of infamy which no printable words could describe, and yet I confess that I pitied him as he went back into that living death of darkness and silence.

We went along the galleries, looking into other cells and at other prisoners, some of whom I was surprised to find quite cheerful, but they were new-comers, and perhaps liked the idleness and the

sleep. Then we came to a corridor cut off by a heavy iron gate. There were six ordinary cells in this, the cells of the condemned, and it is here that the last tragedy of the convict's life on Ile Nou begins.

Let us suppose that, as often happens, there are four or five men lying in these cells under sentence of death. The English murderer knows the day and hour of his doom. These men do not. Every night they go to sleep not knowing whether or not it is their last sleep on earth. All they know is that they are doomed. Then the fiat goes forth that "*Un nommé D.*" is to make the final expiation of his crimes.

That night, when the prison doors are locked, the parts of the guillotine are brought in through the door at the end of the great courtyard, and set up on a platform supported on a stone foundation, under the supervision of "Monsieur de l'Ile Nou," who is always a convict released from his other duties in consideration of performing the last functions of the law on his colleagues.

Soon after three the next morning, accompanied by the Chaplain and the Chief Surveillant, the Commandant mounts the little hill on which the central prison stands. The black doors open,

and they ascend to the corridor of the condemned ; a key clicks in the lock, and the bolts rattle back.

You can, perhaps, imagine what that sound means to A., B., C., and D. Men in their position do not take much awakening. Perhaps they have been waiting for this for weeks.

They hear the footsteps coming along the stone-paved corridor. Which door will they stop at? Think of the agony of apprehension that is compressed into those few seconds!

Then the footsteps stop. Three men wipe the sweat from their brows, and fall back on their plank-beds. They at least will not die for a day or two yet. The fourth hears a key rattle into the lock of his cell door. The door swings open, and the early morning flows in. "*L'un nommé D.*" has already accepted his fate. He is already off his bed and standing to attention as steadily as he can. The Commandant says kindly, and, perhaps, with a check in his voice :

*"C'est pour ce matin !"*

Then he steps back, and the priest takes his place. The door is not closed, but the Commandant and his assistants retire a little out of respect for the last confidences of the condemned.



Meanwhile "Monsieur de l'Ile Nou" has been summoned, and, in due course, he takes the chaplain's place. He binds his patient's hands behind his back, ties his legs so that he can only just walk, and cuts away the collar of his shirt.

At the same time, other and more picturesque preparations have been made in the great courtyard. A company of infantry with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets have been marched in and surround the scaffold in hollow square. Almost at the same time come the Director of the Administration, the Procurator-General, the Clerk of the Marine Tribunal, the Court which holds the power of life and death over the convicts, and a few other officials.

The swift tropical dawn is approaching by this time. The gates and doors of the prison are thrown open, and columns of convicts file into the yard, guarded by surveillants, revolver on hip. They take their places in ranks inside the hollow square of soldiers.

The door at the end of the courtyard opens last of all, and through it comes a little procession composed of the Commandant, the Chief Surveillant, the priest, and "Monsieur de l'Ile Nou," escorting the principal actor in the scene. The priest

mounts the scaffold with the victim, followed by the executioner and his assistant; the clerk of the court reads the verdict and sentence, the Commandant hands his warrant to the Director and then he gives the order :

“Uncover and kneel !”

The broad-brimmed hats come off and the grey-clad ranks sink on their knees around the Altar of Justice. The living sacrifice is asked if he has anything to say. He usually makes a short speech either of exhortation or bravado.

Then, with the assistance of the executioners, he takes his place on a sloping plank. A roll of drums rumbles echoing round the white walls. The plank swings into a horizontal position, the body is thrust forward till the neck is imprisoned in the lunette—the little window through which those who die by French law take their last look at the world. “Monsieur de l’Ile Nou” touches a button; then comes the “skirr” of the falling knife, a sharp thud, and there is one scoundrel the less on Ile Nou.

After which the comrades of the deceased are marched back to breakfast, and thence to their daily tasks.



The Central Prison, Ile Nou. In front is the Execution Ground. The Quadrangle is enclosed by a high whitewashed stone wall.  
To the left is the Chapel in which the condemned may, if they choose, attend Mass for the last time.



## IV

### *MEASUREMENT AND MANIA*

I LEFT the central prison breathing the soft, sweet air, and looking up at the deep blue sky with a sudden sensation of thankfulness which I had never experienced before. In a sense I was like a man who had been blind and had had his sight given back to him ; and I thought of the wretches I had left behind me in that high-walled enclosure and those little black holes built away into the thick walls which, for so many of them, were to be tombs of mental death.

We came down the hill to the Pretoire, the Bureau of Anthropometry. This is the antechamber through which every prisoner must pass who enters the Prisonland of the South. On the way the Commandant and I discussed a topic which I found a favourite one with all the officials whom I met in Caledonia—the differences between the French system and our own.

They were quite as much surprised at the rigours of our system as I at first was at the leniency of theirs—always saving that horrible Cachot Noir.

We went then, as I did many times afterwards, with other officials, into matters of diet, hours, and kinds of labour, detentions, and punishments, and I succeeded in showing him that the Caledonian convict was to be envied in every particular by the English convict, until he came to the threshold of the dark cell. With us, three days' dark 'cell and bread and water is the maximum punishment. There it is five years, and sentences may run consecutively. When the discussion was over the commandant added an entirely French rider to it :

“But, monsieur, you must remember that this is not only imprisonment—it is exile. How many of these poor wretches will ever see France again? Whereas your criminals, when their sentence is done, are set free in their native land.”

To which I replied :

“Quite so, and more's the pity ! Every avenue of honest life is closed to them, and they are released only to commit more crimes and deserve another sentence. There your system is better. You exile them really, but you give them another



home where they have hope. We only exile them socially, and give them no hope."

And this brought us to the door of the Pretoire.

It consisted of three apartments, the middle one was the examination room. To the right hand was a larger chamber, sometimes used as a judgment room. To the left was a smaller one, the walls of which were covered with cabinets containing the records in duplicate of every criminal that had landed on Ile Nou. Beyond this there was a dark-room.

When I had had a general look round and a chat with the Officer who operated the Bertillon system, the Commandant asked me if I would care to go through the mill. To which, not having been found out so far, I consented.

Thereupon I was delivered over into the hands of a functionary who had a pair of eyes like visual gimlets. They bored clean through me every time he looked at me. I was no longer the favoured guest of the all-powerful Administration; I was simply a subject, a thing to be measured, and weighed, and examined in the most minute detail, and to have my most trivial characteristics noted and put down under their proper categories.

He told me to take off my boots and coat. By rights my socks should have come off also, but that, although I offered to do it, was dispensed with. He put me up against a wall, fixed my head with one hand and pushed my stomach in with the other, saw that my knees were properly back against the wall, and lowered the bar on to my head. Then he moved my head a little to right and left, and said to the clerk :

“One metre, 816.”

When this was noted down he sat me in a chair. The seat was longitudinally divided by a ridge ; the back was a measuring scale. Again he took means to satisfy himself that I was sitting perfectly straight, and so my sitting height was taken.

Then he got a pair of callipers, and measured my head in two directions, from back to front and across, all the time calling out the fatal figures which, in case of need, would have identified me among ten million men.

After this he descended to minor matters, ears, nose, lips, thumb- and finger-joints, eyelids, and so on. Then he stood me on a box on which was rudely outlined a human foot. I put my right foot on this, bent forward, and rested my right



The Bureau of Anthropometry, Ile Nou.



hand on a table, using my left leg and foot to keep my balance. When I was steady my foot was measured.

Then I rested my right arm on a table, standing on one leg the while. It was measured from the elbow to the point of the middle finger. After this the prints of my thumb and three fingers were taken, and duly impressed on the *fiche*, or identification card.

Then came the most trying part of the ordeal, the general observation. I stood to attention in the middle of the floor. The gimlet-eyed official walked round me, and looked through and through me, what time the clerk at the table asked questions from the schedule he was filling up.

No detail was so minute as to escape those all-searching eyes. A scar which I had got twenty years before in a football match, though half hidden under an eyebrow, was detected, measured, and noted. The scars of a couple of old knife-stabs in my left hand, and the trace of a parrot-bite on one of my fingers—nothing escaped. The colour of my hair and moustache fell into a certain category. My eyes were examined, and the colours of the iris duly placed in their proper category.

By this time I began to feel as though I were being taken to pieces and examined bit by bit. It was a sort of mental and physical vivisection without the knife and the chloroform. Finally, the gentleman at the desk asked the question, "Intellectuality?"

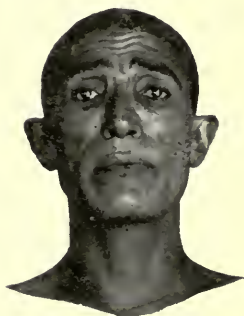
"Mediocre," replied Mr. Gimlet-eyes, with brutal frankness. Then I laughed, and the Commandant suggested that I should be photographed.

"*Pas artistique, mais exact*," he said, as we went into the other room.

"And, therefore," I said, "it will resemble the remarks of your anthropometric expert. I never had such an exact account of myself before. Anthropometry strikes me as being a pretty good medicine for human vanity."

Out of the depth and width of his experience the Commandant agreed with me, and then I was photographed. There was no artistic posing or anything of that sort. I was planted on a chair with my back straightened up and my head in a vice such as other photographers were once wont to torture their victims with. The camera was brought within three feet of me. I was taken full face, staring straight into the lens, and then I was





An Arab Type of Convict. A combination of Ideality and Homicidal Mania.  
[Page 148.]



taken *en profile*. When, many weeks afterwards, I showed the result to my wife, she was sorry I ever went ; but for all that it's a good likeness.

By the time the negatives were developed, and I had satisfied the Commandant that certain black spots which the pitiless lens had detected under my skin were the result of a disease I had contracted years before in South America, and not premonitory symptoms of the plague, it was breakfast-time, and I went down to the canteen, where I found convicts buying wine and cigarettes, and generally conducting themselves like gentlemen at large.

I did not see the Commandant again that day, save for a few minutes after lunch, when he told me that he had an appointment at the Direction in Noumea, and placed me in charge of his lieutenant, the Chief Surveillant. The *Chef* was a very jolly fellow, as, indeed, I found most of these officials to be, and during our drives about the island, we chatted with the utmost freedom. As a matter of fact, it was he who gave me the description of the execution which I reproduced in the last chapter.

He, too, was entirely of the same opinion as

myself as to the pitiless iniquity of the dark cell ; but he took some pains to point out that it was not the fault either of the French Government or of the Administration, but simply of certain politicians in France who wanted a "cry," and got up a crusade among the sentimentalists against "the brutality of flogging bound and helpless prisoners far away from all civilised criticism in New Caledonia." Some of these men, too, as I have said, were *déportés*, or exiled *communards* who had been forgiven, and had brought back batches of stories with them as blood-curdling as they were mendacious.

"*Bien, monsieur*," he said. "You have seen the Cachot Noir. Now we will go to the Disciplinary Camp first, because it is on the road, and then—well, you shall see what the *cachot* does, and when you see that I think you will say the lash is kinder."

The Disciplinary Camps in New Caledonia have no counterpart in the English penal system. "Incorrigibles," who won't work, who are insubordinate, or have a bad influence on their comrades of the Bagne, are sent into them partly for punishment and partly for seclusion.



The Courtyard of a Disciplinary Camp, Ile Nou. Inspection at 5 a.m. after breakfast, and before hard labour. To the right is a Kanaka "Policeman." The average physique of the Criminals may be seen by comparison with myself, standing in front of the Kanaka.





They have poorer food and harder work, no "gratifications" in the way of wine or tobacco, or other little luxuries. They sleep on plank-beds with their feet in anklets, and, if they don't behave themselves, they are promptly clapped into a cell for so many days' solitary confinement on bread and water. For graver offences they are, of course, sent back to the central prison as hopeless cases, after which their own case is usually hopeless for life.

I found several of the men in this camp working in chains. This was another subject about which the sentimentalists made a good deal of fuss in France, but when I saw what the alleged chains really were, I laughed, and said to my friend the *Chef*:

"So that is what you call chains in New Caledonia, is it? May I have a look at one?"

He beckoned to one of the men to come up, and this is what I found: There was an iron band riveted round his right ankle, and to this was attached a chain which, as nearly as I could calculate with my hands, weighed about six pounds. It was as absolutely no inconvenience to its wearer, when he was either sitting or lying down. When he was walking or working he tucked the

end in under his belt, and, as far as I could see, it didn't make any difference to his walk, save a little dragging of the foot. In fact, when I asked him whether it was any trouble to him, he said :

"No, not after a few days. One gets accustomed to it."

"Very likely!" I said. "If you got the chains in an English prison, you would have them on both legs and arms, and you wouldn't be able to take more than a half-stride."

"Ah, they are brutal, those English!" said the scoundrel, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he tucked the end of his chain round his belt and sauntered away.

The chain is usually a punishment for gross insubordination or attempted escape. This man, the *Chef* told me, had tried three times with the chain on, and once had used the loose end to hammer a warder with, for which he got twelve months' Cachot Noir and the chain for life—and a little more, since he would be buried in it.\*

\* With true French economy the price of the chain is charged against the convict's "Succession"—*i.e.* any deferred savings that he may leave behind him.

Then, after I had made the round of the cells, I was taken to a very curious punishment-chamber which is in great vogue in New Caledonia. In one sense it reminded me of our treadmill, though it is not by any means so severe. I have seen a strong man reduced almost to fainting by fifteen minutes on a treadmill. Nothing like this could happen in the Salle des Pas Perdus, as I christened the place when its use had been explained to me.

Here, after a brief and scanty meal at 4.30 a.m., the convicts are lined up in a big room, or, rather, shed, about sixty feet long by forty feet broad. There is absolutely no furniture in the place, with the exception of a dozen flat-topped pyramids of stone placed in straight lines about ten feet from each side.

If there are twenty-four convicts condemned to this particular kind of weariness, twenty-four are taken in, in single file. Then the word "March!" is given, and they begin. Hour after hour the dreary round-and-round is continued in absolute silence. Every half-hour they are allowed to sit on the pyramids for a couple of minutes, and then on again. At eleven the bell rings for

*soupe*, which, in the Camp Disciplinaire, resolves itself into hot water and fat with a piece of bread. In the other camps the bell doesn't go again till one, but these have only their half-hour, and then the promenade begins again, and continues till sunset.

I was assured that those who could stand a week of this with the chain *did* feel its weight, and I don't wonder at it, for a more miserable, weary, limping, draggled-footed crowd of scoundrels I never saw in all my life than I watched that day perambulating round the Hall of Lost Footsteps.

From here we drove across to the western side of the island, and presently came to a magnificent sloping avenue of palm-trees.

"The avenue of the hospital," said the *Chef*. "Now you will see the best and the worst of Ile Nou."

And so it was. We drove down the avenue to a white, heavy stone arch, which reminded me somewhat quaintly of the entrance gates of some of the old Spanish haciendas I had seen up-country in Peru. Inside was a vast, shady garden, brilliant with flowers whose heavy scent was pleasantly tempered by the sweet, cool breeze from the Pacific ;



The Avenue of Palms, leading to the Hospital, Ile Nou.





for the eastern wall of the whole enclosure was washed by the emerald waters of the Lagoon.

In the midst of this garden stood the hospital, built in quadrangular form, but with one side of each "quad" open to the garden. The houses were raised on stone platforms something like the stoep of a Dutch house, and over these the roofs came down in broad verandahs. Grey-clad figures were sitting or lying about on the flags underneath, a few reading or doing some trifling work, and others were wandering about the garden or sleeping in some shady nook. It was, in short, very different from the central prison and the disciplinary camp.

I was introduced to the Medical Director, and he showed me round, omitting one wing, in which he told me there were a couple of cases of plague. I happened to know that there were really about a dozen, so I readily agreed that that part should be left out.

As prison hospital, it differed very little from others that I had seen in England. There was the same neatness and exquisite cleanliness everywhere, though the wards were somewhat darker, and therefore cooler, which, with the midday sun at 106° in the shade, was not a bad thing. All

the nurses were, of course, Sisters of Mercy.\* In fact, practically all the nursing in New Caledonia is done by Sisters, and not a few of these heroic women had become brides of the Black Death before I left.

Here, as in all other prison hospitals I have visited, diet, stimulants, and medicine are absolutely at the discretion of the Director. No matter what the cost, the spark of life must be kept alive as long as possible in the breast of the murderer, the forger, and the thief, or the criminal whose light of reason has already been quenched in the darkness of the Black Cell.

In fact, so careful are the authorities of their patients' general health that they give them nothing in the way of meat but the best beef and mutton that can be imported from Australia; Caledonian fed meat is not considered nourishing enough. In normal times the death-rate of Ile Nou, which is wholly given over to convict camps, is two or three per cent. lower than that of the town of Noumea.

Then from this little flowery paradise of rest and quietness we went across the road to another enclosure in which there were two long, white

\* *Les Sœurs de St. Joseph de Cluny.*



Part of the Hospital Buildings, Ile Nou. The roofed-terrace in front is where the patients take their siesta in the middle of the day. One of these is attached to each court of the Hospital. Some of the mattresses may be seen to the right.



buildings, a prison and a row of offices, at right angles to each other. This was the "bad" side. On the other there had been invalids and invalid lunatics; here there were only lunatics, and mostly dangerous at that—men who, after being criminals, had become madmen; not like the dwellers in Broadmoor, who are only criminal because they are mad.

I once paid a visit to the worst part of the men's side at Broadmoor, but I don't think it was quite as bad as the long corridor which led through that gruesome home of madness. On either hand were heavy black-painted, iron doors, and inside these a hinged grating through which the prisoner could be fed.

The cells were about nine feet by six feet. They had neither furniture nor bedclothes in them. The furniture would have been smashed up either in sheer wanton destruction or for use as missiles to hurl through the grating, and the bedclothes would have been torn up into strips for hanging or strangling purposes.

It has been my good or bad luck to see poor humanity in a good many shapes and guises, but I never saw such a series of pitiful parodies of



manhood as I saw when those cell doors were opened.

Some were crouched down in the corners of their cells, muttering to themselves and picking the sacking in which they were clothed to pieces, thread by thread. It was no use giving them regular prison clothing, for they would pick themselves naked in a couple of days. Others were walking up and down the narrow limits of their cells, staring with horribly vacant eyes at the roof or the floor, and not taking the slightest notice of us.

One man was lying down scraping with bleeding fingers at the black asphalted floor under the impression that he was burrowing his way to freedom ; others were sitting or lying on the floor motionless as death ; and others sprang at the bars like wild beasts the moment the door was opened.

But the most horrible sight I saw during that very bad quarter of an hour was a gaunt-faced, square-built man of middle-height who got up out of a corner as his cell door opened, and stood in the middle facing us.

He never moved a muscle, or winked an eyelid. His eyes looked at us with the steady, burning



stare of hate and ferocity. His lips were drawn back from his teeth like the lips of an ape in a rage, and his hands were half clenched like claws. The man was simply the incarnation of madness, savagery, and despair. He had gone mad in the Black Cell, and the form that his madness had taken was the belief that nothing would nourish him but human flesh. Of course he had to be fed by force.

When we got outside a big warder pulled up his jumper and showed me the marks of two rows of human teeth in his side. If another man hadn't stunned the poor wretch with the butt of his revolver he would have bitten the piece clean out—after which I was glad when the Doctor suggested that I should go to his quarters and have a drink with him.

## V

### A CONVICT ARCADIA

I VISITED two or three other industrial camps and the farm-settlements before I left Ile Nou, but as I had yet to go through the agricultural portions of the colony it would be no use taking up space in describing them here.

There are practically no roads to speak of in New Caledonia outside a short strip of the southwestern coast. In September, 1863, Napoleon the Little signed the decree which converted the virgin paradise of New Caledonia into a hell of vice and misery—a description which is perhaps somewhat strong, but which history has amply justified. In the following year the transport *Iphigénie* took a cargo of two hundred and forty-eight galley-slaves from Toulon, and landed them where the town of Noumea now stands. This consignment was added to by rapidly following transports, and for thirty years at least the

administration of New Caledonia has had at its disposal an average of from seven to ten thousand able-bodied criminals for purposes of general improvement, and more especially for the preparation of the colony for that free colonisation which has been the dream of so many ministers and governors.

Now the area of New Caledonia is, roughly speaking, between six thousand and seven thousand square miles, and after an occupation of nearly forty years it has barely fifty miles of roads over which a two-wheeled vehicle can be driven, and these are only on the south-western side of the island.

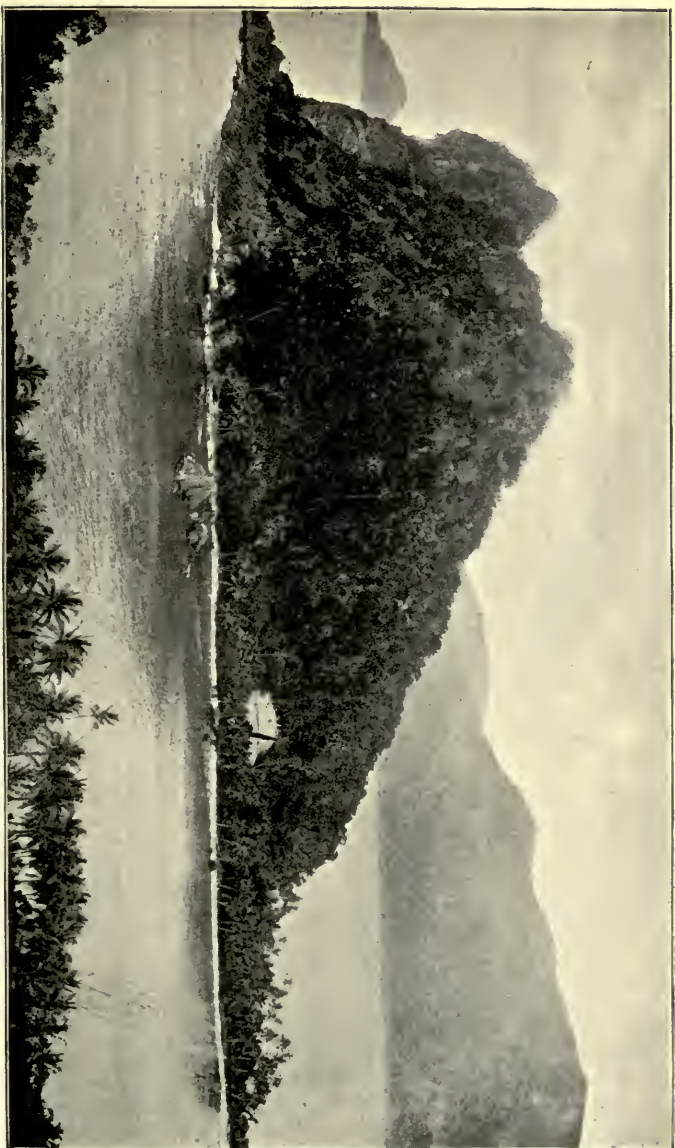
The only one of any consequence is that running from Noumea to Bouloupari, a distance of about thirty miles. At Bourail, which is the great agricultural settlement, there are about twelve miles of road and a long ago abandoned railway bed. Between La Foa and Moindou there is another road about as long ; but both are isolated by miles of mountain and bush from each other and are therefore of very little general use.

One has only to contrast them with the magnificent coach roads made in a much shorter

space of time through the far more difficult Blue Mountain district in New South Wales to see the tremendous difference between the British and the French ideas of colonisation, to say nothing of the railways—two thousand seven hundred miles—and thirty-three thousand miles of telegraph lines.

The result of this scarcity of roads and absolute absence of railways is that when you want to go from anywhere to anywhere else in New Caledonia you have to take the Service des Côtes, which for dirt, discomfort, slowness, and total disregard of the convenience of passengers I can only compare to the Amalgamated Crawlers presently known as the South-Eastern and Chatham Railways. Like them, it is, of course, a monopoly, wherefore if you don't like to go by the boats you can either swim or walk.

The whole of New Caledonia is surrounded by a double line of exceedingly dangerous reefs, cut here and there by "passes," one of which Captain Cook failed to find, and so lost us one of the richest islands in the world. The navigable water both inside and outside the reefs is plentifully dotted with tiny coral islands and sunken reefs a yard or so below the surface and always growing, hence



The Island of "Le Sphinx," one of the tying-up places on the south-west coast of New Caledonia.





navigation is only possible between sunrise and sunset. There is only one lighthouse in all Caledonia.

Thus, when I began to make my arrangements for going to Bourail, I found that I should have to be on the wharf at the unholy hour of 4.30 a.m. I packed my scanty belongings overnight. At 4.15 the cab was at the door. The *cochers* of Noumea either work in relays or never go to sleep. I was just getting awake, and the gorged mosquitos were still sleeping. I dressed and drank my coffee to the accompaniment of considerable language which greatly amused the copper-skinned damsel who brought the coffee up. She also never seemed to sleep.

Somehow I got down to the wharf, and presented myself at the *douannerie* with my "*Certificat de Santé*," which I had got from the hospital the previous evening. The doctor in charge gave me a look over, and countersigned it. Then I went with my luggage into an outer chamber. My bag and camera-cases were squirted with phenic acid from a machine which looked like a cross between a garden hose and a bicycle foot-pump. Then I had to unbutton my jacket, and go through the

same process. The rest of the passengers did the same, and then we started in a strongly smelling line for the steamer.

As we went on board we gave up our bills of health, after which we were not permitted to land again under penalty of forfeiting the passage and being disinfected again. Our luggage now bore yellow labels bearing the legend, "*colis désinfecté*," signed by the medical inspector. These were passed on to the ships by Kanakas, who freely went and came, and passed things to and from the ship without hindrance. As Kanakas are generally supposed to be much better carriers of the plague than white people, our own examination and squirting seemed a trifle superfluous.

The steamer was the *St. Antoine*, which may be described as the Campania of the Service des Côtes. Until I made passages on one of her sister-ships—to be hereafter anathematised—I didn't know how bad a French colonial passenger-boat could be. Afterwards I looked back to her with profound regret and a certain amount of respect; wherefore I will not say all that I thought of her during the eleven hours that she took to struggle over the sixty-odd miles from Noumea to Bourail.

There is no landing-place at the port of Bourail, save for boats, so, after the usual medical inspection was over and I had made myself known to the doctor, I went ashore in his boat. The Commandant was waiting on the shore with his carriage. I presented my credentials, and then came the usual *consommations*, which, being literally interpreted, is French for mixed drinks, after which we drove off to the town of Bourail, eight kilometres away. As we were driving down the tree-arched road I noticed half a dozen horsewomen seated astride *à la Mexicaine*, with gaily coloured skirts flowing behind.

"Ah," I said, "do your ladies here ride South American fashion?"

"My dear sir," he replied, "those are not ladies. They are daughters of convicts, born here in Bourail, and reared under the care of our paternal government! But that is all stopped now, later on you will see why."

"Yes," I said, "I have heard that you have given up trying to make good colonists out of convict stock."

"Yes," he replied; "and none too soon, as you will see."

From which remark I saw that I had to do with a sensible man, so I straightway began to win his good graces by telling him stories of distant lands, for he was more of a Fleming than a Frenchman, and was therefore able to rise to the conception that there are other countries in the world besides France.

I found Bourail a pretty little township, consisting of one street and a square, in the midst of which stood the church, and by dinner-time I found myself installed in a little hotel which was far cleaner and more comfortable than anything I had seen in Noumea, except the club. When I said good-night to the Commandant, he replied :

“Good-night, and sleep well. You needn’t trouble to lock your door. We are all criminals here, but there is no crime.”

Which I subsequently found to be perfectly true.

Everything in New Caledonia begins between five and half-past, unless you happen to be starting by a steamer, and then it’s earlier. My visit to Bourail happened to coincide with a governmental inspection, and early coffee was ordered for five o’clock. That meant that one had to get tubbed, shaved, and dressed, and find one’s boots a little

before five. Bar the Black Death, I disliked New Caledonia mostly on account of its early hours. No civilised persons, with the exception of milkmen and criminals under sentence of death, ought to be obliged to get up before nine.

Still, there was only one bath in the place, and I wanted to be first at it, so I left my blind up, and the sun awoke me.

I got out of bed and went on to the balcony, and well was I rewarded even for getting up at such an unrighteous hour. The night before it had been cloudy and misty, but now I discovered with my first glance from the verandah that I had wandered into something very like a paradise.

I saw that Bourail stood on the slope of a range of hills, and looked out over a fertile valley which was dominated by a much higher range to the north-east. The sun wasn't quite up, and neither were the officers of the Commission, so I went for my bath. There were no mosquitos in Bourail just then, and I had enjoyed for once the luxury of an undisturbed sleep. The water, coming from the hills, was delightfully cool, and I came back feeling, as they say between New York and San Francisco, real good.

The Commission, for some reason or other, did not get up before breakfast-time (11.30), and so we got a good start of them. The Commandant had the carriage round by six o'clock, and, after the usual *consommations*, we got away. It was a lovely morning, the only one of the sort I saw in Bourail, for the next day the clouds gathered and the heavens opened, and down came the floods and made everything but wading and swimming impossible; but this was a day of sheer delight and great interest.

We drove over the scene of a great experiment which, I fear, is destined to fail badly. The province of Bourail is the most fertile in all Caledonia, wherefore in the year 1869 it was chosen by the paternal French Government as the Arcadia of the Redeemed Criminal. The Arcadia is undoubtedly there, the existence of the redeemed criminal struck me as a little doubtful.

As soon as we got under way I reverted to the young ladies we had seen on horseback the evening before.

"You shall see the houses of their parents," said the Commandant; "and afterwards you will see the school where the younger ones are being educated.





A Native Temple, New Caledonia,



For example," he went on, pointing down the street we were just crossing, "all those shops and little stores are kept by people who have been convicts, and most of them are doing a thriving trade. Yonder," he said, waving his hand to the right, "is the convicts' general store, the Syndicat de Bourail. It was founded by a convict, the staff are convicts, and the customers must be convicts. It is what you would call in English a Convict Co-operative Store. It is managed by scoundrels of all kinds, assassins, thieves, forgers, and others. I have to examine the books every three months, and there is never a centime wrong. That is more than most of the great establishments in Sydney could say, is it not?"

I made a non-committal reply, and said :

"Set a thief to catch a thief, or watch him."

"Exactly! There is no other business concern in Caledonia which is managed with such absolute honesty as this is. I should be sorry for the man who tried to cheat the management."

I knew enough of Caledonian society by this time to see that it would not be good manners to press the question any further. Afterwards I had an interview with the manager of the syndicate,

an estimable and excellently conducted forger, who had gained his *rémision*, and was doing exceedingly well for himself and his wife, who, I believe, had blinded somebody with vitriol, and was suspected of dropping her child into the Seine.

He presented me with a prospectus of the company, which showed that it had started with a government loan of a few hundred francs, and now had a reserve fund of nearly forty thousand francs. He was a patient, quiet-spoken, hard-working man who never let a centime go wrong, and increased his personal profits by selling liquors at the back door.

Our route lay across the broad valley which is watered by the River Nera. On either side the ground rose gently into little hillocks better described by the French word *collines*, and on each of these, usually surrounded by a grove of young palms and a dozen acres or so of vineyards, orchards, manioc, plantain, or maize, stood a low, broad-verandahed house, the residence of the redeemed criminal.

I could well have imagined myself driving through a thriving little colony of freemen in some pleasant tropical island upon which the curse of

crime had never descended, and I said so to the Commandant.

“Yes,” he said, “it looks so, doesn’t it? Now, you see that house up there to the left, with the pretty garden in front. The man who owns that concession was a hopeless scoundrel in France. He finished up by murdering his wife after he had lived for years on the wages of her shame. Of course, the jury found extenuating circumstances. He was transported for life, behaved himself excellently, and in about seven years became a concessionnaire.

“He married a woman who had poisoned her husband. They have lived quite happily together, and bring up their children most respectably.”

I was too busy thinking to reply, and he went on, pointing to the right:

“Then, again, up there to the right—that pretty house on the hill surrounded by palms. The man who owns that was once a cashier at the Bank of France. He was a ‘*faussaire de première classe*,’ and he swindled the bank out of three millions of francs before they found him out. He was sent here for twenty years. After eight he was given a concession and his wife and family voluntarily came



out to him. You see, nothing was possible for the wife and children of a convict forger in Paris. Here they live happily on their little estate. No one can throw stones at them, and when they die the estate will belong to their children."

"That certainly seems an improvement on our own system," I said, remembering the piteous stories I had heard of the wives and families of English convicts, ruined through no fault of their own, and with nothing to hope for save the return of a felon husband and father into a world where it was almost impossible for him to live honestly.

"Yes," he said; "I think so. Now, as we turn the corner you will see the house of one of our most successful colonists. There," he said, as the wagonette swung round into a delightful little valley, "that house on the hillside, with the white fence round it, and the other buildings to the side. The owner of that place was a thief, a forger, and an assassin in Paris. He stole some bonds, and forged the coupons. He gave some of the money to his mistress, and found her giving it to some one else, so he stabbed her, and was sent here for life.



"He got his concession, and married a woman who had been sent out for infanticide, as most of them are here. If not that, it is generally poison. Well, now he is a respectable colonist and a prosperous farmer. He has about forty acres of ground well cultivated, as you see. He has thirty head of cattle and a dozen horses, mares, and foals, to say nothing of his cocks and hens and pigs. He supplies nearly the whole of the district with milk, butter, and eggs, and makes a profit of several thousand francs a year. I wish they were all like that!" he concluded, with a little sigh which meant a good deal.

"I wish we could do something like that with our hard cases," I replied, "instead of turning them out into the streets to commit more crimes and beget more criminals. We know that crime is as contagious as well as an hereditary disease, and we not only allow it to spread, but we even encourage it as if we liked it."

"It is a pity," he said sympathetically, "for you have plenty of islands where you might have colonies like this. You do not need to punish them. Remove them, as you would remove a cancer or a tumour, and see that they do not

come back. That is all. Society would be better, and so would they."

I could not but agree with this since every turn of the road brought us to fresh proofs of the present success of the system, and then I asked again :

"But how do these people get their first start? One can't begin farming like this without capital."

"Oh no," he said, "the Government does that. For the first few years, according to the industry and ability of the settler, these people cost us about forty pounds a year each, about what you told me it costs you to keep a criminal in prison. We give them materials for building their houses, tools, and agricultural implements, six months' provisions, and seed for their first harvest. After that they are left to themselves.

"If they cannot make their farm pay within five years or so they lose everything; the children are sent to the convent, and the husband and wife must hire themselves out as servants either to other settlers or to free people. If they do succeed the land becomes absolutely theirs in ten years. If they have children they can leave it to them, or, if they prefer, they can sell it.

“Some, for instance, have got their rehabilitation, their pardon, and restoration of civil rights. They have sold their farms and stock and gone back to France to live comfortably. Their children are, of course, free, though the parents may not leave the colony without rehabilitation. After breakfast I will take you down the street of Bourail, and introduce you to some who have done well in trade, and to-morrow or next day you can see what we do with the children.

## VI

### *SOME HUMAN DOCUMENTS*

SOCIETY in Bourail, although in one sense fairly homogeneous, is from another point of view distinctly mixed. Here, for example, are a few personal items which I picked up during our stroll down the main and one street of the village.

First we turned into a little saddler's shop, the owner of which once boasted the privilege of making the harness for Victor Emmanuel's horses. Unfortunately his exuberant abilities were not content even with such distinction as this, and so he deviated into coining, with the result of hard labour for life. After a few years his good conduct gained him a remission of his sentence, and in due course he became a concessionnaire. His wife, who joined him after his release, is one of the aristocrats of this stratum of Bourailian society.

There is quite a little romance connected with

NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE

et

DÉPENDANCES

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

LIBERTÉ — ÉGALITÉ — FRATERNITÉ

MINISTÈRE DES COLONIES

Administration pénitentiaire.

Il est permis à M

*Guiffith Aubric*

d'aller à *Belep*  
pour visiter le *parcilleron en détail* *disant*  
*vingt-neuf*

Nouméa, le

*19 Janvier 1900*

Le Directeur de l'Administration pénitentiaire,

*Les visiteurs prisons et des quartiers  
collaborer est interdit.*

Mélon Imp adm - Col. P 49 M

Permit to visit a Prison or Penitentiary Camp *en détail*. This is the ordinary form ; but the Author is the only Englishman for whom the words in the left-hand corner were crossed out.

this estimable family. When Madame came out she brought her two daughters with her. Now the elder of these had been engaged to a young man employed at the Ministry of Colonies, and he entered the colonial service by accepting a clerkship at Noumea. The result was naturally a meeting, and the fulfilment of the proverb which says that an old coal is easily rekindled. The engagement broken off by the conviction was renewed, and the wedding followed in due course. The second daughter married a prosperous concessionnaire, and the ex-coiner, well established, and making plenty of properly minted money, has the satisfaction of seeing the second generation of his blood growing up in peace and plenty about him. Imagine such a story as this being true of an English coiner!

A little further on, on the left hand side, is a little lending library, and *cabinet de lecture*. This is kept by a very grave and dignified-looking man, clean-shaven, and keen-featured, and with the manners of a French Chesterfield. "That man's a lawyer," I said to the Commandant, as we left the library. "What is he doing here?"

"You are right. At least, he was a lawyer once, doing well, and married to a very nice woman ;



but he chose to make himself a widower, and that's why he's here. The old story, you know."

Next door was a barber's shop kept by a most gentle-handed housebreaker. He calls himself a "capillary artist," shaves the officials and gendarmerie, cuts the hair of the concessionnaires, and sells perfumes and soaps to their wives and daughters. He also is doing well.

A few doors away from him a *libéré* has an establishment which in a way represents the art and literature of Bourail. He began with ten years for forgery and embezzlement. Now he takes photographs and edits, and, I believe, also writes the *Bourail Indépendent*. As a newspaper for ex-convicts and their keepers, the title struck me as somewhat humorous.

Nearly all branches of trade were represented in that little street. But these may be taken as fairly representative samples of the life-history of those who run them. First, crime at home ; then transportation and punishment ; and then the effort to redeem, made in perfect good faith by the Government, and, so far as these particular camps and settlements are concerned, with distinct success in the present.

Unhappily, however, the Government is finding

out already that free and bond colonists will not mix. They will not even live side by side, wherefore either the whole system of concessions must be given up, or the idea of colonising one of the richest islands in the world with French peasants, artisans, and tradesmen must be abandoned.

Later on in the afternoon we visited the Convent, which is now simply a girls'-school under the charge of the Sisters of St. Joseph de Cluny. A few years ago this convent was perhaps the most extraordinary matrimonial agency that ever existed on the face of the earth. In those days it was officially styled, "House of Correction for Females." The sisters had charge of between seventy and eighty female convicts, to some of whom I shall be able to introduce you later on in the Isle of Pines, and from among these the bachelor or widower convict, who had obtained his provisional release and a concession, was entitled to choose a bride to be his helpmeet on his new start in life. The method of courtship was not exactly what we are accustomed to consider as the fruition of love's young or even middle-aged dream.

After Mass on a particular Sunday the prospective bridegroom was introduced to a selection



The Kiosk in which the Convict Courtships were conducted at Bourail.



of marriageable ladies, young and otherwise. Of beauty there was not much, nor did it count for much. What the convict-cultivator wanted, as a rule, was some one who could help him to till his fields, look after live-stock, and get in his harvests.

When he had made his first selection the lady was asked if she was agreeable to make his further acquaintance. As a rule, she consented, because marriage meant release from durance vile. After that came the queerest courtship imaginable.

About fifty feet away from the postern door at the side of the Convent there still stands a little octagonal kiosk of open trellis-work, which is completely overlooked by the window of the Mother Superior's room. Here each Sunday afternoon the pair met to get acquainted with each other and discuss prospects.

Meanwhile the Mother Superior sat at her window, too far away to be able to hear the soft nothings which might or might not pass between the lovers, but near enough to see that both behaved themselves. Along a path, which cuts the only approach to the kiosk, a surveillant marched, revolver on hip and eye on the kiosk ready to respond to any warning signal from the Mother Superior.

As a rule three Sundays sufficed to bring matters to a happy consummation. The high contracting parties declared themselves satisfied with each other, and the wedding day was fixed, not by themselves, but by arrangement between those who had charge of them.

Sometimes as many as a dozen couples would be turned off together at the *mairie*, and then in the little church at the top of the market-place touching homilies would be delivered by the good old *curé* on the obvious subject of repentance and reform. A sort of general wedding feast was arranged at the expense of the paternal Government, and then the wedded assassins, forgers, coiners, poisoners, and child-murderers went to the homes in which their new life was to begin.

This is perhaps the most daring experiment in criminology that has ever been made. The Administration claimed success for it on the ground that none of the children of such marriages have ever been convicted of an offence against the law. Nevertheless, the Government have most wisely put a stop to this revolting parody on the most sacred of human institutions, and now wife-murderers may no longer marry poisoners or



infanticides with full liberty to reproduce their species and have them educated by the State, to afterwards take their place as free citizens of the colony.

The next day we drove out to the College of the Marist Brothers. It is really a sort of agricultural school, in which from seventy to eighty sons of convict parents are taught the rudiments of learning and religion and the elements of agriculture.

During a conversation with the Brother Superior I stumbled upon a very curious and entirely French contradiction. I had noticed that families in New Caledonia were, as a rule, much larger than in France, and I asked if these were all the boys belonging to the concessionnaires of Bourail.

"Oh no!" he replied; "but, then, you see, we have no power to compel their attendance here. We can only persuade the parents to let them come."

"But," I said, "I understood that primary education was compulsory here as it is in France."

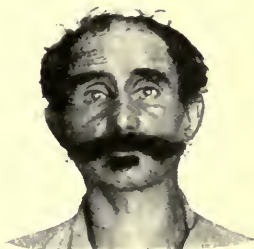
"For the children of free people, yes," he replied regretfully, and with a very soft touch of sarcasm, "but for these, no. The Administration has too much regard for the sanctity of parental authority."

When the boys were lined up before us in

the playground I saw about seventy-six separate and distinct reasons for the abolition of convict marriages. On every face and form were stamped the unmistakable brands of criminality, imbecility, moral crookedness, and general degeneration, not all on each one, but there were none without some.

Later on I started them racing and wrestling, scrambling and tree-climbing for pennies. They behaved just like monkeys with a dash of tiger in them, and I came away more convinced than ever that crime is a hereditary disease which can finally be cured only by the perpetual celibacy of the criminal. Yet in Bourail it is held for a good thing and an example of official wisdom that the children of convicts and of freemen shall sit side by side in the schools and play together in the playgrounds.

On our way home I was introduced to one of the most picturesque and interesting characters that I met in the colony. We pulled up at the top of a hill. On the right hand stood a rude cabin of mud and wattles thatched with palm-leaves, and out of this came to greet us a strange, half-savage figure, long-haired, long-bearded, hairy almost as a monkey on arms and legs and breast, but still with mild and intelligent features, and



Berezowski, the Polish Anarchist who attempted to murder Napoleon III. and the Tsar Alexander II. in the Champs Elysées. All Criminals in New Caledonia are photographed in every possible hirsute disguise ; and finally cropped and clean shaven.

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rather soft brown eyes, in which I soon found the shifting light of insanity.

Acting on a hint the Commandant had already given me, I got out and shook hands with this ragged, shaggy creature, who looked much more like a man who had been marooned for years on a far-away Pacific Island, than an inhabitant of this trim, orderly Penal Settlement. I introduced myself as a messenger from the Queen of England, who had come out for the purpose of presenting her compliments and inquiring after his health.

This was the Pole Berezowski, who more than thirty years ago fired a couple of shots into the carriage in which Napoleon III. and Alexander II. were driving up the Champs Elysées. He is perfectly harmless and well-behaved ; quite contented, too, living on his little patch and in a world of dreams, believing that every foreigner who comes to Bourail is a messenger from some of the crowned heads of Europe, who has crossed the world to inquire after his welfare. Through me he sent a most courteous message to the Queen, which I did not have the honour of delivering.

That night the storm-clouds came over the mountains in good earnest, and I was forced to

abandon my intention of returning to Noumea by road, since the said road would in a few hours be for the most part a collection of torrents, practically impassible, to say nothing of the possibility of a cyclone. There was nothing more to be seen or done, so I accepted the Commandant's offer to drive me back to the port.

On the way he told me an interesting fact and an anecdote, both of which throw considerable light upon the convict's opinion of the settlement of Bourail.

The fact was this : There are in New Caledonia a class of convicts who would be hard to find anywhere else. These are voluntary convicts, and they are all women. A woman commits a crime in France and suffers imprisonment for it. On her release she finds herself, as in England, a social outcast, with no means of gaining a decent living. Instead of continuing a career of crime, as is usually the case here, some of these women will lay their case before the Correctional Tribunal, and petition to be transported to New Caledonia, where they will find themselves in a society which has no right to point the finger of scorn at them.

As a rule the petition is granted, plus a free



passage, unless the woman has friends who can pay. Generally the experiment turns out a success. The woman gets into service or a business, or perhaps marries a *libéré* or concessionnaire, and so wins her way back not only to respectability as it goes in Caledonia, but sometimes to comfort and the possession of property which she can leave to her children.

As a matter of fact, the proprietress of the little hotel at the port was one of these women. She had come out with a few hundred francs that her friends had subscribed. She now owns the hotel, which does an excellent business, a freehold estate of thirty or forty acres, and she employs fifteen Kanakas, half a dozen convicts, and a Chinaman—who is her husband, and works harder than any of them.

The anecdote hinged somewhat closely on the fact, and was itself a fact.

There is a weekly market at Bourail, to which the convict farmers bring their produce and such cows, horses, calves, etc., as they have to sell. Every two or three years their industry is stimulated and rewarded by the holding of an agricultural exhibition, and, as a rule, the Governor goes over to distribute the prizes. One of these exhibitions

had been held, I regret to say, a short time before my arrival, and the Governor who has the work of colonisation very seriously at heart, made speeches both appropriate and affecting to the various winners as they came to receive their prizes.

At length a hoary old scoundrel, who had developed into a most successful stock-breeder, and had become quite a man of means, came up to receive his prizes from his Excellency's hands. M. Feuillet, as usual, made a very nice little speech, congratulating him on the change in his fortunes, which, by the help of a paternal government, had transformed him from a common thief and vagabond to an honest and prosperous owner of property.

So well did his words go home that there were tears in the eyes of the reformed reprobate when he had finished, but there were many lips in the audience trying hard not to smile when he replied :

*"Ah, oui, mon Gouverneur ! if I had only known what good chances an unfortunate man has here I would have been here ten years before."*

What his Excellency really thought on the subject is not recorded.

The hotel was crowded that night for the steamer

was to sail for Noumea, as usual, at five o'clock in the morning ; but as Madame was busy she was kind enough to give up her own chamber to me ; and so I slept comfortably to the accompaniment of a perfect bombardment of water on the corrugated iron roof. Others spread themselves on tables and floors as best they could, and paid for accommodation all the same.

By four o'clock one of those magical tropic changes had occurred, and when I turned out the moon was dropping over the hills to the westward, and Aurora was hanging like a huge white diamond in a cloudless eastern sky. The air was sweetly fresh and cool. There were no mosquitos, and altogether it was a good thing to be alive, for the time being at least.

Soon after the little convict camp at the port woke up. We had our early coffee, with a dash of something to keep the cold out, and I made an early breakfast on tinned beef and bread—convict rations—and both very good for a hungry man. Then came the news that the steamboat *La France* had tied up at another port to the northward on account of the storm, and would not put in an appearance until night, which made a day and

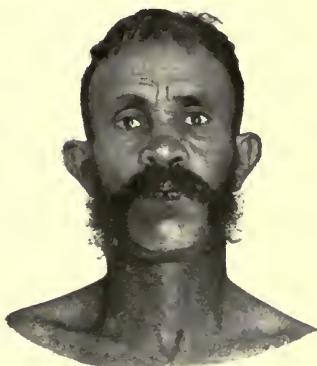
another night to wait, as the coast navigation is only possible in daylight.

I naturally said things about getting up at four o'clock for nothing more than a day's compulsory loafing, but I got through the day somehow with the aid of some fishing and yarning with the surveillants and the convicts, one of whom, a very intelligent Arab, told me, with quiet pride, the story of his escape from New Caledonia twelve years before.

He had got to Australia in an open boat, with a pair of oars, the branch of a tree for a mast and a shirt for a sail. He made his way to Europe, roamed the Mediterranean as a sailor for nine years, and then, at Marseilles, he had made friends with a man who turned out to be a *mouchard*. This animal, after worming his secret out of him under pledge of eternal friendship, earned promotion by giving him away, and so here he was for life.

He seemed perfectly content, but when I asked him what he would do with that friend if he had him in the bush for a few minutes, I was answered by a gleam of white teeth, a flash of black eyes, and a shake of the head, which, taken together, were a good deal more eloquent than words.

*La France* turned up that afternoon, so did the



One of the Lowest Types of Criminal Faces. An illustration of the ease with which it is possible to disguise the chin, typical of moral weakness, and the wild-beast mouth, which nearly all Criminals have, by means of moustache and beard.  
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Commission of Inspection from Bourail with several other passengers. I was told that we should be crowded, but until I got on board in the dawn of the next morning I never knew how crowded a steamer could be.

I had travelled by many crafts under sail and steam from a south sea island canoe to an Atlantic greyhound, but never had the Fates shipped me on board such a craft as *La France*. She was an English-built cargo boat, about a hundred and thirty feet long, with engines which had developed sixty horse-power over twenty years ago. She had three cabins on each side of the dog-kennel that was called the saloon.

If she had been allowed to leave an English port at all she would have been licensed to carry about eight passengers aft and twenty on deck. On this passage she had twelve first-class, about fifteen second, and between fifty and sixty on deck, including twenty convicts and *relégués* on the forecastle, and a dozen hard cases in chains on the forehatch.

She also carried a menagerie of pigs, goats, sheep, poultry, geese, and ducks, which wandered at their own will over the deck-cargo which was piled up to the tops of her bulwarks. Her quarter-deck

contained about twenty square feet, mostly encumbered by luggage. The second-class passengers had to dine here somehow. The first-class dined in the saloon in relays.

The food was just what a Frenchman would eat on a Caledonian coast-boat. It was cooked under indescribable conditions which you couldn't help seeing ; but for all that the miserable meals were studiously divided into courses just as they might have been in the best restaurant in Paris.

Everything was dirty and everthing smelt. In fact the whole ship stank so from stem to stern that even the keenest nose could not have distinguished between the smell of fried fish and toasted cheese. The pervading odours were too strong. Moreover, nearly every passenger was sick in the most reckless and inconsiderate fashion ; so when it came to the midday meal I got the *maître d'hôtel*, as they called the greasy youth who acted as chief steward, to give me a bottle of wine, a little tin of tongue, and some fairly clean biscuits, and with these I went for'ward on to the forecastle and dined among the convicts.

The forecastle was high out of the water, and got all the breeze, and the convicts were clean

because they had to be. I shared my meal and bread and wine with two or three of them. Then we had a smoke and a yarn, after which I lay down among them and went to sleep, and so *La France* and her unhappy company struggled and perspired through the long, hot day back into plague-stricken Noumea. When I left *La France* I cursed her from stem to stern, and truck to kelson. If language could have sunk a ship she would have gone down there and then at her moorings; but my anathemas came back upon my own head, for the untoward Fates afterwards doomed me to make three more passages in her.

To get clean and eat a decent dinner at the Cercle was something of a recompense even for an all-day passage in *La France*. But it is not a very cheerful place to come back to, for the shadow of the Black Death was growing deeper and deeper over the town. The plague was worse than ever. The microbe had eluded the sentries and got under or over the iron barriers, and was striking down whites and blacks indiscriminately, wherefore I concluded that Noumea was a very good place to get out of, and, as I thought, made my arrangements for doing so as quickly as possible.

## VII

### THE PLACE OF EXILES

MY next expedition was to include the forest camps to the south-west of the island, and a visit to the Isle of Pines, an ocean paradise of which I had read much in the days of my youth ; wherefore I looked forward with some anticipation to seeing it with the eyes of flesh. There would be no steamer for three or four days, so the next day I took a trip over to the Peninsula of Ducos, to the northward of the bay.

The glory of Ducos as a penal settlement is past. There are now only a few "politicals," and traitors, and convicts condemned a *perpétuité* ; that is to say, prisoners for life, with no hope of remission or release. A considerable proportion of them are in hospital, dragging out the remainder of their hopeless days, waiting until this or the other disease gives them final release.

On another part of the peninsula, in a semi-



The Peninsula of Ducos. In the background is Ile Nou with the Central Criminal Depot.





circular valley, hemmed in by precipitous hills, there is a piteously forlorn colony, that of the *libérés collectifs*; that is to say, convicts who have been released from prison, but are compelled to live in one place under supervision. They are mostly men whose health has broken down under the work of the *bagne*, or who have been released on account of old age.

They live in wretched little cabins on the allotments, which it is their business to keep in some sort of cultivation. They have the poor privileges of growing beards and moustaches if they like, and of wearing blue dungaree instead of grey, and of earning a few pence a week by selling their produce to the Administration.

This is not much, but they are extremely proud of it, and hold themselves much higher than the common *forçat*. They do not consider themselves prisoners, but only "in the service of the Administration." I have seldom, if ever, seen a more forlorn and hopeless collection of human beings in all my wanderings.

There was, however, a time when Ducos was one of the busiest and most important of the New Caledonian Settlements, for it was here that the

most notorious and most dangerous of the *communards* were imprisoned after their suppression in 1872. Here lived Louise Michel, the high-priestess of anarchy, devoting herself to the care of the sick and the sorrowing with a self-sacrifice which rivalled even that of the Sisters of Mercy, and here, too, Henri Rochefort lived in a tiny stone house in the midst of what was once a garden, and the delight of his days of exile.

Louise Michel's house has disappeared in the course of improvements. Rochefort's house is a roofless ruin in the midst of a jungle which takes a good deal of getting through. It was from here that he made his escape with Pain and Humbert and two other *communards* in an English cutter, which may or may not have been in the harbour for that particular purpose.

One night they did not turn up to muster, but it was explained that Rochefort and Humbert had gone fishing, and the others were away on a tour "with permission." As they did not return during the night search-parties were sent out for them. Meanwhile, they had kept a rendezvous at midnight with the cutter's boat and got aboard.

The next day was a dead calm ; and, as the cutter

lay helpless at her anchor, the fugitives concealed themselves about her cargo as best they could. The hue and cry was out all over the coast, but the searchers looked everywhere but just the one place where they were. If the next day had been calm they must have been caught, for the authorities had decided on a thorough search of every vessel in the harbour. Happily for them a breeze sprang up towards the next morning, and the cutter slipped quietly out. Once beyond the outward reef the fugitives were in neutral water, and, being political prisoners, they could not be brought back.

By daylight the truth was discovered, but pursuit was impossible. The cutter had got too long a start for any sailing vessel to overtake her in the light wind, and the only steamer which the administration then possessed had gone away to Bourail to fetch back the Governor's wife. If it had been in the harbour that morning, at least one picturesque career might have been very different. MacMahon was President at the time, and of all men on earth he had the most deadly fear of Rochefort, so he took a blind revenge for his escape by ordering the Governor to expel every one who was even suspected of assisting in the escape.

The story was told to me by one who suffered through this edict quite innocently, and to his utter ruin. He was then one of the most prosperous men in Noumea. He owned an hotel and several stores, and had mail and road-making contracts with the government. Unhappily, one of his stores was on the Peninsula of Ducos, and the man who managed it was reputed to be very friendly with Rochefort.

This was enough. He was ordered to clear out to Australia in two months. It was in vain that he offered himself for trial on the definite charge of assisting a prisoner to escape. The Governor and every one else sympathised deeply with him, but they dare not even be just, and out he had to go. He is now canteen-keeper on the Isle of Pines, selling groceries and drink to the officials and *relégués* at prices fixed by the government. He told me this story one night at dinner at his own table.

The general amnesty of 1880 released Louise Michel and the rest of those who had survived the terrible revolt of 1871 from Ducos and the Isle of Pines.

There are, however, two other celebrities left

on Ducos. One of them is a tall, erect, grizzled Arab, every inch a chieftain, even in his prison garb. This is Abu-Mezrag-Mokrani, one of the leaders of the Kabyle insurrection of 1871, a man who once had fifteen thousand desert horsemen at his beck and call. Now he rules a little encampment in one of the valleys of the peninsula, containing forty or fifty of his old companions-in-arms, deported with him after the insurrection was put down.

When the Kanaka rebellion broke out in New Caledonia in 1878, Abu-Mezrag volunteered to lead his men against the rebels in the service of France. The offer was accepted and the old warriors of the desert acquitted themselves excellently among the tree-clad mountains of "La Nouvelle." When the rebellion was over a petition for their pardon was sent to the home government, but the remnant of them are still cultivating their little patches of ground on Ducos.

The other surviving celebrity is known in Caledonia as the Caledonian Dreyfus, and this is his story :

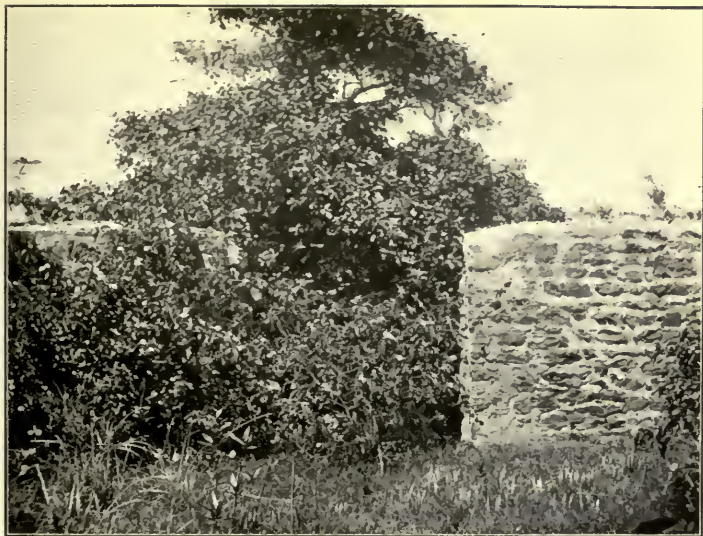
In 1888 Louis Chatelain was a *sous-officier* of the line stationed in Paris. He was dapper,

good-looking, and a delightful talker. He engaged the affections of a lady whose ideas as to expenditure were far too expansive to be gratified out of the pay of a *sous-officier*. Poor Chatelain got into debt, mortgaged or sold everything that he had, and still the lady was unsatisfied. Finally, after certain recriminations, and when he had given her everything but his honour, she suggested a means by which he could make a fortune with very little trouble. She had, it appears, made the acquaintance of a gentleman who knew some one connected with a foreign army, who would give twenty thousand francs for one of the then new-pattern Lebel rifles.

He entered into correspondence with the foreign gentleman, addressing him—c/o the —— Embassy, Paris. His letters were stopped, opened, photographed, and sent on. So were the replies. Then the negotiations were suddenly broken off, Chatelain was summoned before the military tribunal and confronted with the *pièces de conviction*. He confessed openly, posing as a martyr to *la grande passion*—and his sentence was deportation for life.

When I went into his little sleeping-room at





The remains of Henri Rochefort's House.



The Bedroom of Louis Chatelain, "The Caledonian Dreyfus" in Ducos. The photographs on the wall and the one on the table are those of the woman who ruined him.



Ducos, I found on a little table beside his mosquito-curtained bed, a photograph of a very good-looking young woman. On the wall above the table there were two others of the same enchantress, the evil genius of his life. The moment he felt she deserted him. Unlike many another Frenchwoman, who has done so for lover or husband, she did not follow him across the world to Caledonia, and yet every night and morning of his life Louis Chatelain kneels down in front of that table as he might before an altar, and says his prayers with his eyes on those photographs.

## VIII

### *A PARADISE OF KNAVES*

FOR the next three or four days after my visit to the Peninsula of Ducos there was nothing definite to be learnt about means of transit. In fact there was nothing certain except the plague—always that Spectre which seemed to stand at the end of every pathway. It was really getting quite monotonous, and I was beginning to wonder whether I should ever get out of Noumea at all.

Then I began making inquiries as to an over-land journey through the interior. No, that was impossible, save at great risk and expense. The Spectre had jumped the mountains. Huge armies of rats had appeared in the bush, just as though some Pied Piper of Hamelin had enticed them away from the towns into the mountains, and they were spreading the plague in all directions among the Kanakas.

It is a curious fact that rats, who of all animals

are the most susceptible to the plague, will migrate from a plague-stricken town just as they will try to escape from a sinking ship.

Convicts and Kanakas were dying in unknown numbers. Camps were being closed, and the rains were coming on. There was nothing to be seen or done worth seeing or doing, so I had to content myself with wandering about Noumea and the neighbourhood, taking photographs, making acquaintances with convicts and *libérés*, and getting stories out of them, wondering the while, as every one else was doing, what the Spectre was going to do next.

As far as I was concerned, he did me the unkindest turn that he could have done, save one. He infected the only two decent boats on the Coast Service, and so left me the choice between voyaging to the Isle of Pines in *La France* or stopping where I was.

I had to get to the island somehow, so I chose *La France*, and at five o'clock one morning, after being duly inspected and squirted, I once more boarded the detestable little hooker.

I thought my first passage in her was bad enough, but it was nothing to this. She was swarming

with passengers, bond and free, black, white, and yellow, from end to end. She was loaded literally down to the deck, and she smelt, if possible, even stronger than she did before. The worst of this was that before we got to the Isle of Pines we had to get outside the reef and into the open water.

I have seen too much of seafaring to be easily frightened on salt water, but I candidly admit that I was frightened then. In fact, when we got outside and she began to feel the swell, I took out my swimming-jacket and put it on, though, of course this was a pretty forlorn hope, as the water was swarming with sharks and the shortest swim would have been a couple of miles. Still, one always likes to take the last chance.

Happily, she was English-built, and high in the bows, so she took nothing but spray over. Two or three green seas would have swamped her to a certainty, but they didn't come, and so in time we got there.

On board I renewed the acquaintance of the Commandant of Ile Nou, who was taking his wife and family to the Isle of Pines, which is to Caledonia as the Riviera is to Europe. At midday we stopped at Prony, the headquarters of the forest



camps which I was to visit later on my return ; and we lunched in the saloon with six inches of water on the floor. That was the first time I ever saw a steamer baled out with buckets. Still, they managed to get the water under somehow. There didn't appear to be a pump on board.

When we passed the reef, and started on the sixty-mile run through the open sea, some began to say their prayers and some said other things, but in the end we worried through, and just as the evening star was growing golden in the west we anchored in the lovely little Bay of Kuto.

Never before had I heard the anchor chain rumble through the hawse-hole with greater thankfulness than I did then, and, judging by the limp and bedraggled look of every one, bond and free, who went ashore, I don't think I was alone in hoping that I had seen the last of *La France*—which I hadn't.

My friend the Commandant introduced me to his *confrère* of the Isle of Pines. He was not particularly sympathetic. I believe I was the only Englishman who had ever come to the island with authority to inspect his domains, and he didn't take very kindly to the idea. Still, ruler and all

as he was in his own land, the long arm of the Minister of Colonies reached even to the Isle of Pines, and, although he did not even offer me the usual courtesy of a glass of wine, he handed the credentials back to me, and said :

“*Très bien, monsieur !* If you will come and see me at nine o'clock to-morrow morning we will make arrangements. You will, I think, find accommodation at the canteen.”

With that I took my leave, and went out into the darkness to find the canteen and some one to carry my luggage there. I found a *surveillant*, who found a *relégué*, and he shouldered my bag and found the canteen, the only semblance of an hotel on the island.

There, quite unknowingly, I stumbled upon excellent friends. The canteen-keeper was the man whose story I told in the last chapter. I was a stranger from a very strange land. Their resources are very limited ; for communications with the *grand terre* were few and far between, and yet the twenty days that I was compelled to stop on the Isle of Pines, proved after all to be the pleasantest time that I had spent in New Caledonia.

But there was one exception, happily only a transient experience, yet bad enough in its way. If the plague was not on board *La France* it ought to have been, for never did a fitter nursery of microbes get afloat, and when I got into the wretched little bedroom, which was all they could fix up for me that night, I honestly believed that the little wriggling devil had got into the white corpuscles of my blood.

I had all the symptoms with which the conversation of the doctors at the Cercle in Noumea had made me only too familiar—headache, stomach-ache, nausea, dizziness, aching under the armpits and in the groins.

Of course, I was about as frightened as an ordinary person could very well be, a great deal more so in fact than I had been a few years before when I first experienced the sensation of being shot at. It may have been the fright or the fact, but the glands were swelling.

Then I caught myself repeating fragments of "Abide with me," mixed up with Kipling's "Song of the Banjo"; and when a lucid interval came I decided that the case was serious.

I had three things with me which no traveller

in the outlands of the world should be without—quinine, chlorodyne, and sulpholine lotion. I took a big dose of quinine, and then one of chlorodyne. I should be afraid to say how big they were. Then I soaked four handkerchiefs in the lotion, put them where they were wanted, and laid down to speculate as to what would happen if the microbe had really caught me?

I had an appointment with the Commandant at nine o'clock the next morning. His house was more than a mile away. What would happen if I couldn't walk in the morning?

I should have to explain matters, if I were still sane, to the people at the canteen. I had just come from Noumea, the very centre of the plague. The inference would be instant. The military doctor in charge of the hospital would be sent for, and he would say *la Peste*. I should be taken to the hospital, where, a day or two after, I saw a man suspected of the plague die of blood-poisoning, and once there—*quien sabe?*

Thinking this and many other incongruously mixed-up things, I went to sleep. Probably it was only a matter of a few minutes altogether. Nine hours after I woke and thought I was in

heaven. The pains and the deadly fear were gone. I pulled my watch out from under my pillow. It was ten minutes to seven. The light was filtering in through the closely shut *persiennes*. The waves on the silver-sanded beach within a few yards of my bedroom were saying as plainly and seductively as waves ever said:

“Come and have a dip, and wash all that plague nonsense out of your head.”

So I got up, opened the window, put on my deck-shoes, and walked down to the beach.

I could walk! Out of hell I had come back to earth. A few hours before I had really believed that the next dawn would be shadowed by the presence of the Black Death. Now I looked up at the sapphire sky, and threw my hands above my head to make sure that the pains in the armpits were gone. Then I stepped out to the full length of my stride along the smooth, hard coral sand, to see if the groins were right.

Having reached a decent distance from the canteen I rolled into the cool, bright, blue water, and for half an hour I splashed around—not daring to go much beyond my depth, because those same blue waters are often cut by the

black triangle of a shark's dorsal fin—thinking how good a thing it was to live instead of dying, especially in such a paradise as this.

When I paid my official visit after breakfast, I found M. le Commandant in a more friendly mood. We exchanged cigarettes and compliments, and then we had a stroll round the little settlement of Kuto.

Kuto is most exquisitely situated on a promontory between two delicious, white-shored, palm-fringed bays, broken with fantastic, tree-crowned rocks. Long ago it was the home of the "politicals" and those soldiers of the *Commune* who had not been thought dangerous enough to be put in batches against a wall and shot. In those days Kuto, so they told me, might have been taken for a tiny suburb of Paris. It had a theatre, and a couple of newspapers, one serious and one humorous. There were social functions and many gaieties in the intervals of road-making and barrack-building.

But nowadays all this is changed. The *déportés* have gone back to France, and the *relégués* have come in their place, which is the same thing as saying that over this lovely scrap of earth there has descended the moral night of



incurable crime and hopeless despair. Kuto is now a silent place of prisons, barracks, and workshops, inhabited by a few soldiers and officials and many blue-clad figures with clean-shaven faces, mostly repulsive to look upon and all stamped with the seal of stolid despair.

In order that you may understand what manner of people these were it is necessary to explain the meaning of the French legal term *relégation*, since there is nothing at all corresponding to it in the English system.

In France, as in all countries, there are criminals of many kinds and ranks, and of these the French *relégués* are the lowest and meanest. I have said before that in the criminal society of New Caledonia the assassins, forgers, embezzlers, and what we should call swell-mobsmen form the aristocracy. The *relégués* are the lowest class. They are the gutter-snipes of crime ; the hard cases ; the human refuse beyond all hope of social salvation ; mental and moral derelicts, of no use to themselves or anybody else.

We have thousands of them in this country, but we don't deal as wisely or as humanely with them as the French do. Our judges and

magistrates send them to prison again and again, well knowing that they will only come out to commit more crimes and be sent again to prison, becoming in the intervals of liberty the wives and husbands and parents of other criminals.

This is one of the social problems which they deal with better in France. There is no nonsense there about a criminal "having paid his debt to society" when he has served his sentence, and being, therefore, free to go and commit more crimes. When a man or woman has committed a certain number of crimes of the minor sort, or has been convicted of hopeless immorality or alcoholism—in other words, when there is reason to believe that he or she is absolutely unfit to possess the rights of citizenship—such person may be, in the last resort, sentenced as in England, say, to twelve or eighteen months' hard labour as punishment for that particular crime.

Now in an English police-court the habitual criminal might possibly thank the magistrate and go away to "do it on his head," but in France he may hear the fatal words :

"At the expiration of your sentence you will be placed in *relégation*."



The "Market" in the Convent, Isle of Pines. The Female *Reliqués* are drawn up before one of the Prison Buildings. In the foreground are the Kanakas waiting to sell their fruit and vegetables.

*Drawn by Harold Piffard from a photograph.*

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Of this the meaning is: "You have proved yourself unfit to live in the society of your fellow-citizens. Punishment is no warning to you. You will neither reform yourself nor be reformed; therefore Society has done with you: you are banished! You will be fed and clothed and attended when you are sick. You will have work found for you, and you will be paid for it. But if you won't work there will be the prison and the cell for you. Now go, and make the best of it."

The banishment is practically for life. There are circumstances under which a *relégué* can win his release, but there are two things that he can never do: he can never gain a concession and marry and settle down on his own property; and he can never gain restoration of the full rights of citizenship—both of which, as I have shown, the *forçat* can do.

As we drove out through the big gate in the wall which had been built across the neck of the peninsula to keep revolting Kanakas out, I remarked what a pity it was that such a lovely land should be nothing better than the habitation of scoundrels, to which the Commandant replied that the island served the purposes of the Administration very

well, and if the *relégués* were not there it would have to be given over to the Kanakas, for free colonists would not come.

I thought—but, of course, I didn't say—what British colonists would have made of such a paradise—fertile, well-watered, and blest with an absolutely perfect climate.

The first thing I noticed in the Isle of Pines was the excellence and extent of the roads. They are broad, level, and beautifully kept, and, tiny as the island is, there are many more miles of them than there are in all New Caledonia. They were mostly made by the deported *communards*, who also built the solid stone prisons, barracks, hospitals, chapels, and official residences which seemed to me to be ample for about twice the present white population of the island, which is under two thousand, bond and free.

I found very little difference between the treatment of the *relégués* and the best class of convicts, save that they were rather better fed, and lived in open camps. They slept in hammocks in common dormitories, and were permitted to have any little luxuries that they could buy with their earnings. There were no plank-beds or



chains to be seen in the camps. In fact, they might just have been ordinary industrial settlements, save for the blue cotton livery, the bandless straw hats, and the hang-dog, hopeless faces which looked out under the brims.

But before our first drive was half over we passed a big quadrangle of high, white walls, and over the little black door in front was the word "Prison" in big black letters.

"That's for the hard cases, I suppose?" I said to the Commandant as we passed.

"Yes," he said; "we will visit it another day, and you shall see. This is worse than Ile Nou, you know. There they have the aristocrats. Here we have the canaille, the sweepings of the streets. Any one of these animals here would cut your throat for a few francs if he dare."

Then I told him what the Commandant of Bourail had said about locking doors.

He laughed, and said:

"*Parfaitement*, but you had better lock your door here, and if you have a revolver put it under your pillow."

The advice was well-meant but somewhat superfluous. The faces I had seen were quite enough.

I soon found that my friend was somewhat of a cynic and a humorist in his way, for when I asked him what was the greatest punishment he could inflict on a recalcitrant *relégué*, he said :

“Make him work. Look at that gang of men yonder,” he went on, pointing to the hillside, which a long row of blue-clad figures was breaking up with picks and spades. “Every stroke of the pick is a punishment to those men. They are wretches whose only idea of life is to get through it without working. They have been thieves and swindlers, beggars and *souteneurs*—everything that is useless and vile. There is nothing they have not done to save themselves from working. Now, you see, we make them work.”

“And if they won’t?”

“*Eh bien !* They have stomachs—and soup and fish and meat and coffee and a drink of wine now and then, with a cigarette or a pipe, are better than bread and water, and the open air in a country like this is better than the black cell or the *quartier disciplinaire*, which you will see later on.”

“In other words,” I said, “you have gone

back to the good old law : If a man will not work, neither shall he eat. Well, I must admit that you deal more sensibly with your hopeless vagabonds than we do with ours."

"*Bien possible*," he said, with some justification, "you will see that at least we make some use of them, more than they would in Paris or London, I think. For instance, this is our farm."

As he said this we pulled up opposite to a rustic arch, over which were the words *Ferme Uro*.

We went down through a flowery avenue to a pretty verandahed house almost buried in greenery and flowers—the home of the Farm Superintendent. He came out and greeted his territorial lord, and then we went over the farm.

It was as perfect a specimen of what the French call *petit culture* as could be imagined. It was, in fact, rather a collection of exquisitely kept vegetable gardens than a farm. Every patch was irrigated by water from the low hills which run across the centre of the island. Every kind of vegetable, tropical and temperate, was under cultivation, and outside the gardens there were broad fields of maize and grass pasture.

In one of the fields I saw a long line of women hoeing the ridges for corn, and at one end of the line stood a white-clad surveillant, revolver on hip. For the fiftieth time my English prejudices were shocked when I learnt that these were a detachment of the female *relégués*; and I wondered what would be thought at home if the lady-guests at Aylesbury were turned out to work in the fields under the charge of a male warder. Here it was quite a matter of course.

“Wait till you have made the acquaintance of the ladies,” laughed the Commandant, in reply to a rather injudicious question, “and you will see that they want some watching.”

## IX

### *USE FOR THE USELESS*

FROM the farm of Uro, after a drink of delicious milk, which, for some reason or other, took me back instantly to far-away England, we went on a few miles along the road to the ateliers, or workshops, where all kinds of industries, from boot-making to waggon-building, were being carried on in a somewhat leisurely style, and under what seemed to me very slight supervision.

“This is a hard school for them to learn and us to teach in,” said the Commandant. “The *forçats* generally know a trade and are accustomed to work, if they have not been gentlemen; but these have been brought up to hate the name of work. Yet you see we have made something of them. Everything that is used on the island is made here. In fact, we make something which will be used a long way from here.”

I saw this later on during our visit to the prison,

which was too similar to the others to need any description. About a score of the occupants of a big shed within the walls were busy plaiting a long, reedy grass which others, squatted about the yard, were stripping and preparing for them. They had to get through so much a day or their rations were docked. The unhappy wastrels didn't seem to like the regime at all, but they worked, if only for their stomachs' sake.

When we left the prison we went to a long shed, where the plaits were being worked up into matting—miles of it there appeared to be—and when I asked what it was all for, I learnt that it was destined to be trodden by the millions of careless feet which would saunter through the halls and corridors of the Paris Exhibition.

This was the contribution of this far-away spot to the great show. Of course, those who were making it knew what it was for. Perhaps their thoughts—if they had any by this time, beyond their daily meat and drink, or any dreams of delight, beyond the little luxuries that their hard-earned pence could buy them at the canteen—were travelling even as they stitched back to the elysium of crime and idleness which they would never see



again. From what I saw and heard I doubt not that many a bitter thought was woven in with the miles of matting which afterwards covered the exhibition floors.

The next day we went to make the acquaintance of the lady *reléguées*, who are accommodated in the Convent, as it is called, under the charge of a Mother Superior and six Sisters of St. Joseph, among whom I was a little surprised to find one who, learning that I was English, came and greeted me in a deliciously delicate Irish brogue. She was an Irish lady who had taken the vows in a French Convent, and had voluntarily exiled herself to this far-away foreign land to spend the rest of her days in a prison. Still, she and her French sisters appeared to be most cheerfully contented with their lot.

They had, however, one little trace of feminine vanity left. They sorely wanted their photographs taken, and my Irish compatriot wanted it most of all. It was against the rules not only of the Administration, but of their order, wherefore the photographs which I did take of the convent and its occupants did not turn out successes.

There were one hundred and seventy-six female

*reléguées* in the Convent just then, mostly healthy, hearty-looking women of all ages, from twenty to sixty. Their faces were, if anything, more repulsive than the men's. They had committed almost every possible crime, but most of them were there for infanticide. I was the first man—not an official—that they had seen, perhaps, for a good many years, for there are few visitors to the Isles of Pines, and fewer still to the jealously guarded Convent.

A little before dinner that evening I was sitting under the trees in front of the canteen jotting down some notes when I heard a voice, with a suspicion of tears in it, asking whether “monsieur would speak for a minute with an unfortunate woman.”

I turned round, and saw the gaunt figure and unlovely face of Marie, the *reléguée* housemaid of the canteen. Here was another human document, I thought, so I told her to go on.

She was in great trouble, she told me, and as I was a friend of the Government and of the Administration I could help her if I would. She had been released from the Convent to take service at the canteen, but though she was comfortable,

and had a good master and mistress, her heart was pining for the society of her husband, who was working in enforced celibacy in far-away Bourail. They had been parted for a trifle, and she was sure that if "Milor" interceded for her with the Director she would be restored to his longing arms.

When she had finished, I said :

"And what was your husband sent out here for? "

"*Il a éventré un homme,*" she murmured.

"And what are you here for? " I continued.

"*J'ai tué mon enfant,*" she murmured again as softly as before.

I did not think the reunion desirable, and so the petition was not presented. Nevertheless, it would have probably been a very difficult matter to have convinced that woman that she hadn't a perfect right to rejoin her husband, raise a family, and become with him a landed proprietor. I learnt afterwards that she had been relegated to the Isle of Pines for theft aggravated by assault with a hatchet.

Somehow the food that she handed round the table at the canteen that night didn't taste quite as nice as usual, in spite of the conversation of

Madame Blaise and her two charming daughters, the elder of whom, though she had never been farther into the world than Noumea, might, as far as grace of speech and action went, have just come out from Paris.

In the course of the next few days I wandered, sometimes in the Commandant's carriage and sometimes afoot, all over the island, and ascended its only mountain, the Pic 'Nga, on the top of which there are the foundations of an old fort and look-out tower, dating back, so they say, to the old days of the pirates of the southern seas. From here you can see every bay and inlet round the coast, and a very lovely picture the verdant island made, fringed by its circlet of reefs and coral islets, with their emerald lagoons and white breakers, and the deep blue of the open ocean beyond.

Another day I went through the native reserve, and visited the settlement of the Marist Brothers, a most delightful little nook where the good brothers lead a contented existence, teaching their bronze scholars the beauties of the Catholic Faith, and the beneficence of the good French Government, which graciously permits them to live in a part of their own country, and sell their produce to

the officials and such of their prisoners as have money *à prix fixe*.

After this I visited the coffee plantation—the only actually profitable industry in which prisoners are employed in New Caledonia—the hospitals and the disciplinary camps, which I found practically the same as those which I had already seen on the mainland.

The hospital was, however, an even more delightful abode of disease and crime than the one on Ile Nou. It stands well up the hillside behind the Convent, and the view from its terraces is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. With the exception of the man who died of blood-poisoning under suspicion of the plague, the principal disease seemed general decay and old age. In fact, out of a criminal population of over twelve hundred, there were only thirty patients, for which reason the Isle of Pines, with its perfect climate, reminded me of Mark Twain's Californian health resort, which was so healthy that the inhabitants had to go somewhere else to die.

Later on I saw a much more mournful place than the hospital. This was the Camp des Impotents.

I don't think I ever saw a more miserable,



forlorn-looking collection of human beings than I found here. They were not suffering from any specific disease, or else, of course, they would have been in the hospital. They are just mental and physical derelicts, harmless imbeciles, cripples incapable of work, and men dying quietly of old age.

Of course, the camp was exquisitely situated, and their lot struck me as being, after all, not a very bad ending to a useless, hopeless life—to dream away the last years under that lovely sun, breathing that delicious air, and waiting quietly for the end without anxiety or care.

The poor wretches looked at me somewhat as they might have looked at a visitor from some other world. They had ceased to be criminals or prisoners. They had no more crime left in them, and they would not have escaped if they could, so in their case discipline was relaxed and I spent a few francs in buying some of the rude carvings and a few walking-sticks which they had made out of lianes, the only work with which they whiled away the long sunny hours. It was worth twenty times the money to see their feeble, almost pitiful, delight as they looked at the little



silver coins in their brown, shrivelled hands, and I really think that some at least of the blessings which followed me out of the camp were sincere. But when I said this to the Commandant he only smiled, and said :

“Perhaps ! But no doubt they would like a visitor from England every day.”

A few days after I had finished my round of visits to the prison camps I had the privilege of assisting at a session of the Disciplinary Commission, a court whose function it is to hear complaints, grant redresses and privileges, try offences against the penal regulations, and inflict punishment. The Commandant is President, *ex officio*, and he is assisted by an officer of the Administration, who is a sort of civil magistrate and the Conductor of Works. These functionaries sit at a curved desk on a platform, and here, for the first time, I took my seat on a judicial bench.

There was a space of about twelve feet between the end of the platform and the railing which divided off the rest of the hall. Here the Principal Surveillant sat at one desk, and opposite to him on the other side of the room the *Greffier* or Clerk of the Court.

The court being a French one, precedence was, of course, given to the ladies. They were brought in one by one through a side door between the railings and the platform. The triviality of their complaints testified eloquently to the narrowness of the little lives they led.

One woman accused another of stealing her needle and thread so as to get her into trouble. Another wanted three halfpence of her savings, which she said the Mother Superior was unjustly keeping from her. A third wanted to know why she hadn't had a letter from a friend of hers in service in Noumea, and was gravely informed that the plague had seriously interrupted communications and the letter would probably arrive as soon as possible. Another had rheumatism, and wanted to be taken off the field-work; besides, she was getting too old, she was nearly seventy—and her request was promptly granted.

Then a few were accused of little acts of idleness or insubordination or wastefulness. These were either fined a penny or so, according to the magnitude of the offence, or dismissed with a caution.

It must not, however, be imagined from this that the ladies of the *relégation* at the Isle of Pines

are exactly models of female deportment, for, as the Commandant told me afterwards, they once revolted, and before help could be got they had caught two surveillants, stripped them stark naked, and made them run the gauntlet of the Convent between two rows of beautiful palms, after which they douched them well in a muddy duck-pond. They were proceeding to treat the good sisters in the same way when rescue arrived from Kuto and the other camps.

The male prisoners were a terribly hard-looking lot. They were brought up in twos and threes—plaintiff, defendant, and witnesses—and they accused each other of every sort of crime, from stealing a bit of bread to attempted murder.

The English axiom about dog eating dog does not hold good among *relégués*. They will steal from each other just as cheerfully as they will from anybody else, and will descend to any little meanness to spite each other. Most of the offences were of the pettiest and meanest kind, such as stealing each other's clothes, or food, or tools and selling them for a penny or so to some one else who had lost his.

Others were up for being out of bounds after

hours, and I noticed that these nearly all said they'd been fishing, which was not inappropriate.

During the proceedings I was very much struck by the appearance of an Arab in the grey uniform of the *quartier disciplinaire*. He was a tall, well-built, handsome fellow of about thirty, with a frank, open expression and an ever-smiling mouth which continually showed a magnificent set of teeth. There was a wonderful difference between him and his fellow-scoundrels, but I learned afterwards that he was the biggest scoundrel of the whole lot.

Two or three hundred years ago he would probably have commanded a fleet of Corsairs, and made his name a terror from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. Now, thanks to changed environment, he was only a deserter and a common thief who could not even keep his hands off the property of his fellow-thieves.

The procedure of the Court was quite different to anything we have in England. The prisoners were all, as I say, brought up and examined individually with accusers and witnesses. Then they were taken away what time the Court deliberated and fixed the sentence. Then the whole lot were brought in and ranged up along the two sides

of the room. The *greffier* called out the names, and each man stepped forward, heard his sentence, and was marched out. The Arab took his fifteen days' prison with an even jauntier smile than usual.

While this was going on I had been making a study in criminal physiognomy, and I came to the conclusion that if forty criminals were taken at random from English prisons, dressed exactly as these forty French criminals were, and mixed up with them, it would be absolutely impossible to tell which were French and which were English. There is no nationality in crime. Criminals belong to a distinct branch of the human family, and the family likeness among them is unmistakable.

As we were driving back that morning the Commandant invited me to a picnic which he was giving in honour of the Commandant of Ile Nou and myself. Naturally I accepted, and, being on the subject of pleasure excursions, I said :

"Of course you must have some delightful yachting and fishing about these lovely bays. I have been wondering why I haven't seen any sailing craft about."

"That is forbidden," he said. "No one may own even a rowing boat without the licence of



the Administration in Noumea, and even then he would have to give guarantees for its safety. You see these fellows would think nothing of stealing a boat and trying to escape in it, and the owner of the boat would be responsible for any escapes. Twenty-five of the politicals once managed to make a big canoe and got away in it, but they were all drowned or eaten by the sharks. Now all boats, even the Kanakas' canoes, have to be kept locked and chained and guarded from sunset to sunrise."

This, then, was why these smooth, sunlit waters were sailless and deserted—another effect of the curse of Crime on Paradise.

The picnic was a great success, and the Commandant proved a most excellent host. There were four wagonette loads of us, with a fair sprinkling of pretty girls, among whom, of course, were my host's daughters. Everybody seemed to have forgotten for the time that I was an Englishman, and so I passed a very jolly day.

We camped in a big white stone building which had once been a *gendarmerie* barracks, standing in a delightful valley near to the entrance of a magnificent limestone cavern. We lunched sumptuously under the verandah, and I think I



prattled French more volubly than I had ever done before. Then we went and shot pigeons, quite half as big again as the English variety, and splendid eating. The woods of the Isle of Pines swarmed with them and other feathered game whose names I don't remember.

Of course, we wound up with a dance, and this was the queerest dance I had ever seen. Our drivers and attendants were, of course, all *relégués*, and so were the musicians. One ingenious scoundrel led the orchestra with a fiddle that he had made himself, even to the strings and the bow. It had an excellent tone, and he played it very well. I wanted to buy it, but he loved it and wouldn't sell.

I must say that I pitied these musicians not a little as I watched them standing in a corner looking with hungry eyes upon the Forbidden and the Unattainable as it floated about the room in dainty light draperies with the arms of other men about its waist—for the *relégué* is not like the *forçat*. He has no hope of marriage, even with the meanest of his kind. His sentence includes, and very wisely too, perpetual celibacy.

All the same, I tried to picture to myself a

picnic, say, at Dartmoor, with a company of English men and maidens dancing in one of the prison halls to music made by a convict band!

When the feast was over every bottle, full and empty, every knife, fork, spoon, plate, cup, and dish was counted over. The remnants were given away, but everything else was packed under the official eye. If the slightest trifle had been overlooked it would have been immediately stolen. This is one of the peculiarities of picnicing in Prisonland.

A few days afterwards my pleasant exile came to an end. The ungainly form of *La France* waddled into the bay, bringing news of the outside world. The principal items were to the effect that the plague was increasing merrily in Noumea, and that the victorious Boers were driving the British into the sea.

We had quite a sad little supper that night at the canteen, for I was rapidly becoming quite one of the family. Still this was the turning-point in my thirty-thousand-mile journey. At daybreak the snub nose of *La France* would point toward home, and so when I had said good-bye for the third or fourth time I pulled out across the bay

which lay like a sheet of shimmering silver under the glorious tropic moon, and boarded the wretched little hooker for the last time with feelings something akin to thankfulness.

When many days afterwards, I got back to Noumea the Director asked me what I thought of the Isle of Pines.

"If you want my candid opinion," I said, "I think it is an earthly paradise which you have used as a dust-heap to shoot your rubbish on. If the French Government would give me a hundred years' lease of it, with power to do as I liked as long as I didn't break the law, I would find capital enough in England and Australia to make it the Monte Carlo of the South Pacific. I'd have everything there that there is at Monte Carlo, and a couple of fast boats to bring the people over from Sydney in two days. I'd have all the wealth and fashion of Australia and a good many people from Europe there every year. In fact, your paradise should pay you a million francs a year and me twenty millions."

"Ah!" he said, after a few moments of silence. "That is just like you English. That is enterprise. Here we only have government."

## X

### *A LAND OF WOOD AND IRON*

NEW CALEDONIA is essentially a land of contrasts, both in scenery and climate, and when I had left the sunny hills and plains and the silver-sanded, palm-fringed bays of the Isle of Pines some fifty miles behind me, I found myself in a region of enormous forests, clothing the slopes of rugged mountains running sheer down to the sea from the clouds which rarely broke above them.

There were no white beaches here, only boulder-strewn shores, which were literally, as well as in the metaphorical sense, iron-bound. Not only the rocks and the boulders, but the very sands of the shore themselves were of iron, sometimes pure, but, as a rule, containing from eighty-five to ninety per cent. of the metal.

This was Prony, the chief of a cluster of convict camps scattered about what is literally a land of

wood and iron. The wood is used, the iron is not. Millions of tons of it are lying round the shores of one of the finest and safest natural harbours in the world. A thousand miles away are the coal-fields of New South Wales. Since it pays to ship copper and iron from Spain and even South America to Swansea, one would think it would pay to ship this to Newcastle. However, there it lies, waiting, I suppose for some one to make fortunes out of it, and the energies of the eight hundred or one thousand *relégués* are devoted to hewing timber in the forests, bringing it down to the shore, and floating it in big barges to Prony, where there is a finely equipped saw and planing mill.

The dressed timber is, of course, the property of the Administration, and is used for building wharves and jetties. A good deal of it is sold to the public for building purposes. Some day, too, there is going to be a real railway in Caledonia, and then the forest camps of the Baie du Sud will furnish the sleepers, signal-posts, and platforms.

Meanwhile Prony has a railway all to itself, of which I shall here give some account.

I was fortunate in making two very pleasant



acquaintances in this out-of-the-way corner of the world. One was the Commandant, who was quite the most intelligent and broad-minded man of his class that I met in Caledonia, and the other was the Doctor of the port. He was, of course, a military Doctor, and held the rank of lieutenant in the army. His official title was "Le Médecin Major!" He had seen a good deal of the world, and had visited the United States on a French warship, and from him I heard the first words of English that I had heard for nearly three weeks. The dear little Doctor was proud of his English, and he had a right to be. Although it was not very extensive, it was distinctly select. One day the Commandant referred somewhat slightly to it as "*son peu d'Anglais*"; but perhaps that was because he couldn't speak a single word himself. At any rate, he never tried to.

At Prony, too, I renewed my acquaintance with the microbe. In fact, the Doctor was there because of him. One day a coast steamer had brought some tons of flour for the station, which depended entirely for its food on Noumea and Australia. The sacks were stacked under cover in the Commissariat Department. The little



daughter of the Chief Surveillant got playing about among these sacks. Some infected rats had been doing the same a short time before, and so she got the plague.

The Doctor was telegraphed for to Noumea, and he came and saved her, and, thanks to his skill and precautions, that was the only case in Prony, although we actually had the infection in the midst of us, and for the fifteen days that I was tied up there we ate bread made from that flour !

I often had to pass the sacks, but I did so at a respectful distance. One morning, however, I had a bit of a fright. There had been a deluge of rain all night, and, when I woke, I found a dead and very wet mouse on my bedroom floor.

What if it had come from those sacks ?

I drenched it with corrosive sublimate, and pitched it carefully out of doors with a stick. Then I poured petroleum over it and burnt it and the stick, and there the incident closed.

It always struck me as somewhat of a miracle that rats did not find those sacks out and spread the plague broadcast among us. It would have been a terrible thing in that isolated camp, cut

off from all communication with the world except the telegraph. Perhaps there were no rats. At any rate, I never saw any, and felt duly thankful.

There are no roads about Prony, only foot-paths, and not many of these, so we paid our visits to the camps in steam launches. When it was fine it was very pleasant work cruising about the picturesque bays, discoursing the while on crime, criminals, and colonisation with the intelligent Commandant, or swopping Anglo-French jokes and stories with the Doctor, who had a very pretty wit of his own.

The Commandant was a firm believer in relegation and transportation generally, but like every one else, he looked down upon the *libéré* and the *relégué*. According to him a *forçat* was worth two *libérés*, and a *libéré* was worth a *relégué* and a half, if not more. Nevertheless, during my stay at Prony I saw a squad of *relégués* working about as hard as I have ever seen men work. This was on the railway aforesaid.

We started one morning, as usual, about five o'clock, and steamed across two or three bays to the Camp du Nord. In all the other camps the timber is got down from the hills to the



The Convict Railway at Prony.  
*Drawn by Harold Piffard from a photograph.*



sea by means of wood-paved slides, which are quite as much a feature of this part of Caledonia as the ice-slides are in Norway, but the Camp du Nord rises to the dignity of a railway on which that morning I did the most curious bit of railroading I have ever done.

When we had inspected the camp at the terminus and, for the Commandant's sake, I had duly admired the landing-stage, the trim buildings, and the gardens in which the flowers and vegetables were struggling for existence in the burning iron soil, the State car was brought out for us.

It was a platform on wheels, with four sloping seats facing backwards. I could see the line twining away up through the forest, but there was no engine.

Presently it, or, rather, they, materialised at the summons of the Chief Surveillant. Fifteen blue-clad figures, each with a halter and hook-rope over his shoulder, came out of one of the dormitories. There was a long chain shackled to the front of the car. At an order the human beasts of draught passed the halters over their heads and hooked on to the chain, seven on each side and one ahead.

Then the Commandant invited the company to mount. There were seven of us. The Commandant had brought his two little girls, and there were four besides: the Chief Surveillant, who weighed fifteen stone if he weighed a pound, the Chief Forester, who weighed a good twelve stone, and the Doctor and myself, who were comparatively light weights.

I had often seen convicts harnessed to carts in England, and, of course, I had ridden many miles in rickshaws in the East, but this was the first time I had ever travelled in a car drawn by human beings who did it because they had to, and who would have had their food docked if they had refused to do it, and I confess that I didn't exactly like it. Still, I took my place, and the strange journey began.

At first it didn't seem very bad, for the line was almost level, but when we got into the hills the collar-work began, and our human cattle had to bend their necks and their backs to it.

The line wound up through cuttings and over bridges at what seemed to me an ever-increasing gradient. It was a damp, muggy, tropical morning. It was not exactly raining, but the moisture soaked



you to the bones for all that, and the leaves and branches of the vast virgin forest on either hand shone and dripped as the moisture condensed on them.

We perspired sitting still and making no more exertion than was necessary for breathing, so you can imagine how those poor wretches tugging at the chains sweated—and, great heavens, how they stank!—though the most fastidious, under the circumstances, could hardly blame them for this.

For very shame's sake I got off and walked whenever there was an excuse. It made breathing pleasanter. So did the Doctor, who was a botanist and found us Venus' Fly-Traps and other weird vegetable monsters. The Forester also got off now and then, not from motives of mercy, but to point out varieties of timber to the Commandant. The Chief Surveillant sat tight, probably on account of his weight, until I wanted to put him into one of the halters.

But what, though I hardly like to say so, disgusted me most was the absolute callousness, as it seemed to me, of the two little girls. Perhaps the worst of it was that it was absolutely innocent. They had been born and bred in Prisonland, and

I don't suppose they really saw any difference between that sweating, straining, panting team of human cattle and a team of mules or donkeys.

At last, to my own infinite relief, the journey was over. What it must have been like to our team I can only guess from the fact that in a distance of a little over four miles they had dragged us up one thousand five hundred feet! It took an hour and three-quarters to do it. They were dismissed when we got to the top and allowed to have a drink—of water.

The Doctor took us back. He understood the brake, and in consideration for the young ladies he kept the speed moderate. We got back in twelve minutes and a half. He said he had done it in six; but I wasn't with him then, and didn't want to be.

Although forestry is, of course, the same all the world over, and, therefore, not the sort of thing to describe here in detail, there were two other camps that I visited which had interesting peculiarities of their own. One of these was the Camp of Bonne Anse, a pretty little spot whence a very steep and stony path led over a little range to a promontory called Cap Ndoua, which is the

telegraph station for the Isle of Pines. I don't know whether there are any other telegraphic stations which have neither cables nor wires and make no use of electricity, but this and the one on the Isle of Pines were the only ones I have ever seen.

When I was taken into the operating-room at Cap Ndoua I saw an apparatus which looked to me like a gigantic magic-lantern with a telescope fixed to its side. In the front of the big iron box there was a huge lens about eighteen inches across, behind this was another smaller one, and behind this again a powerful oil lamp, with a movable screen in front of it, worked with a sort of trigger; on a table in the corner of the room were the usual telegraphic transmitters and receivers in connection with the general telegraphic system to Noumea and the cable to Sydney.

Every evening at seven, when it is of course quite dark, the operators go on duty until nine. If Ndoua has a message to send to the island the lamp is lit, and the man at the telescope in the observatory above the hospital on the island sees a gleam of white light across the forty-six miles of sea. He lights his lamp, and the preliminary

signal twinkles through the darkness. Then the shutter begins to work. Short and long flashes gleam out in quick succession, the dots and dashes of the Morse system in fact; and so the words which have come over the wire from Noumea, or, perhaps, from the uttermost ends of the earth, are translated into light, and sent through the darkness with even more than electrical speed.

Saving only fogs, which are not very frequent in those latitudes, the optic telegraph is just as reliable as the cable and the wire, and they are good for any distance up to the range of the telescope. The apparatus cost about £50 apiece, while a cable would cost several thousands; and it struck me that for quick communication between the mainland and islands or distant light-houses, the optic telegraph is worthy of a wider use than it seems to have.

The other visit was to Port Boisé, near to Cape Queen Charlotte, which is the extreme north-western point of Caledonia. Port Boisé is, like so many other of the Caledonian convict camps, a most beautiful spot. It is fertile, too, thanks to the existence of ancient bog lands, which make it possible to temper the heat of the

ferruginous soil, and so skill and patience have made it a delightful oasis in the midst of the vast forest and jungle which surround it on all sides save the one opening to the sea.

These forests and jungles, by the way, are of somewhat peculiar growth ; the timber is mostly what is called *chêne-gomme*, and is an apparent combination of oak- and gum-tree. It is almost as hard as the iron which is the chief ingredient in the soil from which it derives its sap, and it is practically indestructible. As for the jungle, it is composed of brush and creepers which have the consistency of wire ropes—a sort of vegetable steel cable, in fact.

But for me, as an Englishman, the chief interest in Port Boisé was connected with Cape Queen Charlotte, and a little island lying about five miles out to sea, which is called Le Mouillage de Cook—the Anchorage of Captain Cook. It was here that the great navigator made perhaps the greatest mistake of his life. As every one knows, he discovered and named New Caledonia. He sailed along its shores, and contented himself with describing it as an island of lofty mountains surrounded by reefs which made it inaccessible.



He anchored at a little island, and named the bold promontory in front of him Cape Queen Charlotte. He landed here, and, as he says, found the natives very civil and obliging. It is a million pities that he did not cultivate their friendship further, and learn something about their country. He would not then have described it as "inaccessible" and "unapproachable."

Beyond the bay in which his boats landed he would have found a stretch of open country under the hills across which his men could have marched till they discovered what is now the Baie du Sud—another Sydney Cove in miniature. If he had only done this, Caledonia, with its enormous mineral wealth and its magnificent harbours, would have been British instead of French, a worthy appanage to that other Empire of the future, the new-born Commonwealth of Australia.

I discussed this with the Commandant as we walked back to Bonne Anse, and he told me the story of how on a much later occasion we also lost Caledonia.

Once upon a time, a little more than fifty years ago, there were two frigates lying in Sydney Harbour—one British and one French. We will



call the British ship H.M.S. *Dodderer*. She was commanded by an old woman in naval uniform who ought to have been superannuated years before. The Frenchman, as events proved, was a man of a very different sort.

New Caledonia in those days was a sort of No-Man's Land, but there were both Catholic and Protestant European missionaries working among the natives. The two warships received almost simultaneous orders to go and annex the island. They started the same day. The British frigate out-sailed the Frenchman, but her captain had got those fatal words of Captain Cook's deep-rooted in his mind, and when he got near the dreaded reefs he began to take soundings. The Frenchman went ahead, neck or nothing. He gambled his ship to win a colony, and, taking only the most ordinary precautions, he kept on his course.

By great good luck he struck the broad passage through the reef which leads to the harbour of Noumea, and when H.M.S. *Dodderer* eventually groped her way in she found the French frigate at anchor, and the Tricolour flying from a flagstaff on one of the hills, after which the French

captain politely invited him and his officers to lunch and to an excursion on French soil; and here ends a short but exasperating chapter in our colonial history.

I had been ten days in Prony when we visited Port Boisé, and each day we had been looking anxiously for the coming of the steamer which was to bring us food and me release. Morning after morning we looked out across the bay to the two islands which guarded the channel through which she had to come, but for six more days never a whiff of smoke drifted across the clear-cut horizon. Meanwhile, food was running very low, and we were getting decidedly *ennuyés*. So one day, by way of a diversion, the Doctor proposed that we should break the law and go dynamite-fishing and shark-slaying.

The fresh meat had given out. Vegetables—far more important to a Frenchman than to an Englishman—were nearly a memory. The fruit supply of the camp was represented by a lime-tree in the Doctor's garden, and that grew in imported soil. No fruit would grow in the iron soil of Prony. The preserved Australian meat was getting very low. In short, in a few more days we should

have got within measurable distance of starvation, and then mutiny; and it was with an idea of deferring such unpleasant contingencies that the doctor suggested we should go fishing.

Any change from the monotony of wandering about the little area walled in by jungle and forest, impassable by any save those who knew the Kanaka paths, was welcome, and I began to talk gladly about rods and line and bait, to which the doctor replied :

“Oh no, we must work quicker than that. We shall fish with dynamite! You will see them come to the bait, and then—*pouf!*—there breaks out the waterquake, not earthquake, as you say, and they are all dead—hundreds! You shall see sharks, too. Dynamite is good medicine for them.”

This sounded interesting, and I got up the next morning about half-past four, more cheerfully than usual, because, of course, we were going to start at five o'clock. It was a dull, cloudy, steamy morning when I went down to the jetty, and found the big whale-boat manned by six stalwart Kanakas armed with their throwing-spears, and the Doctor with a little saloon rifle, and the

Director of Works—the biggest and most English-looking Frenchman that I met in the colony—with his pockets full of dynamite.

We first paid a visit to a camp about eight miles away, taking a contribution of meat and bread, and the news that the long-expected supplies had not yet come. Then we shaped our course for Sharks' Bay, which proved to be a most characteristically tropical piece of water. The dense vegetation not only came down to the water's edge, but threw out long, snaky-looking roots a couple of yards from the shore. It was among these that the first sport began, because it was in these oily-looking shallows that the flat fish were wont to take refuge from the wolves of the sea.

This was the Kanakas' part of the sport. We ran the boat in quietly and four of them went ashore with their spears. The Director of Works did the same, and when he had landed I felt that the Doctor and I were a little farther off from the razor-edged brink of eternity than when he was sitting beside us with enough dynamite in his pockets to blow the boat to matchwood and ourselves beyond the confines of time.

We amused ourselves by taking potshots at the black triangles which keenly cut the un-rippled surface of the brown water. As far as my own experience goes, I don't think there's another piece of water in the world that possesses as many sharks to the acre as that well-named bay. Wherever you looked you could see a black fin cutting the water, and every minute or so you would see a swirling eddy which meant that one of the sea-wolves had made a dash at something, and had either got an instalment of his breakfast or missed it.

When I was talking this over afterwards with the Doctor, who was a bit of a naturalist, I learnt a little more about the doctrine of evolution and the survival of the fittest than I knew before. Sharks swarm in the New Caledonian waters, and the only chance for their victims is flight; wherefore about the shores of New Caledonia you find the fastest swimming fish in the world.

After we had had a few ineffective shots at dorsal fins, one of our crew said "Ough!" and pointed to the shore. We pulled in, it being evident that there was sport afoot. The Kanakas



ashore had been climbing with marvellous agility over the snaky water-roots of the trees until they had come to a tiny little cove.

They were leaning over the roots peering down into the water, motionless as bronze images. Then one swiftly and silently shinned up a tree with his spear in his mouth. He got a foot-and hand-hold. Then with his right hand he took the spear out of his teeth, balanced it for a moment, and then down it went like a flash of lightning.

The next instant there was a terrific commotion in the water below. Three other spears went down, and our men laid to their oars and rushed the boat in. Two of the others jumped into the water, and the crowd began struggling with a huge flat-fish, something like an exaggerated flounder, which was nailed to the bottom by a couple of spears. When we got him into the boat, I thought he would have knocked the side out of it. Subsequently he made good eating for many hungry convicts.

Meanwhile, the Director had been wandering about with a cigarette in his mouth and a dynamite cartridge in his hand, looking for his prey,



which, unoblingly, kept too far out. His turn was to come later on, when we had pulled across past the sulphur stream to the mouth of the river which flows into Sharks' Bay.

It is a rather curious fact that the waters of this bay are strongly impregnated with sulphur, and yet, as I have said, they are literally swarming with fish. They evidently seemed to like it, for both the sharks and their victims were thicker in the neighbourhood of the submarine springs than they were anywhere else. Wherefore it was here that we made the best bags.

Our Kanakas seemed to have a faculty of seeing through the brown water which none of us possessed. Again and again they located swarms of fish that we had no notion of. One of them lay in the bows with his big black eyes seeing things where we could see nothing, and directing our course by moving his right or left hand.

Meanwhile the dynamiter stood on the seat with one foot on the gunwale, puffing at his cigarette, keeping it in a glow so that he might light the fuse of his cartridge at it. Presently there came from the bows a low intense whisper, "Stop!" The Kanakas use a good deal more

English than French when they're out sporting. He got up and pointed to the water about ten yards ahead, and hissed :

“ There, là ! plenty ! *beaucoup !* ”

The dynamiter took his cigarette from his lips, blew the ash away, and touched the end of the fuse with it. Then he pitched his cartridge into the water about ten yards from the boat. Ten seconds later a volcano seemed to burst up from the bottom of the bay, and the boat jumped as if a whale's flipper had struck her. The water ahead boiled up into a little hillock of foam and dropped again.

Then all about us I saw the water sprinkled with the white bellies of fish, some quite dead, and others swimming in a feeble, purposeless sort of way with their tails. The next moment there were six big splashes, and I saw six pairs of brown legs disappearing into the water, after which heads and arms bobbed up, and it began to rain fish into the boat.

They ran from eight to eighteen inches in length, and from two to six pounds in weight, and so I took some pains to dodge them as they came flying up out of the water. They

were something like bass, but they had the heads and tails of mackerel, and they swam like lightning—of course, before they struck the dynamite.

I have often watched, in clearer waters, the sharks hunting shoals of them. The Caledonian shark can get a tremendous speed on him. I have seen a twelve-footer carried clean out of the water by the impetus of his rush. But the way these things dodged them just at the moment that they turned over to make their grab was simply marvellous. You would see a shark plunge into the midst of a swarm of them. The long, blue-grey body would turn over, the mouth—the ugliest mouth in all creation—would open, and the tripled-armed jaws would clash together on a mouthful of empty water. Every fish had vanished, and brother shark would give a disgusted wriggle, and go on the prowl again.

Escapes of this kind were, of course, due to inherited wisdom, but dynamite was a recent experience, and the fish fell victims to it through sheer curiosity. When the cartridge dropped into the middle of the shoal they naturally scattered in all directions. Then they came back to see what had fallen into the water, and after that

came the catastrophe. Those who died were victims to curiosity. Those who escaped would probably be about the most scared fish that ever wagged a fin.

The effect of the dynamite on those who did not escape was most extraordinary. In every case the vertebral column was broken just behind the head, and the heart was as cleanly divided as if it had been cut with a razor.

When we had our boat about half full we started in pursuit of bigger game. The shock of the explosion had startled the sharks, who, like all bullies, are mostly cowards, and the Kanakas had kept them away by beating the water every now and then with their hands in their usual fashion. So our dripping, laughing crew, sure now of a splendid feed, pulled merrily down the bay to a point on which we landed two of them and the dynamiter. They crept stealthily along the tangled shore till one of the Kanakas stopped and pointed to three little black spots on the surface of a tiny jungle-fringed bay.

The dynamiter took out a cigarette and lit it, watching the three points the while as they moved along the oily surface through little eddies made

by the great bodies underneath. Presently they formed a triangle not many feet apart. Two or three vigorous whiffs of his cigarette, a touch to the fuse, and a motion of the hand, a scurry in the water—and then a muffled bang and an uprising of muddy water.

We waited a moment or two, and then we could see something white—three streaks of it—gleaming through the water, and three livid shapes rose slowly to the surface, wagging the great tails which would never send them through the water again. Their horrible mouths were a little open, but they would never close fish or man again.

I took the Doctor's word for it that their necks, so to speak, were broken, and their hearts split as those of the smaller fry were ; but I didn't make any personal investigations, for soon after the troubling of the waters had subsided there came swift, swirling rushes from all sides ; black fins cut the water, white bellies gleamed under it, and then came a clashing of cannibal jaws, a tugging and a tearing, a silent, horrible contest, and presently all that was left of those three sharks was a blood-reddened scum on the surface of the little leaf-fringed bay.



Our morning's fishing closed with the slaying of a shark who fell a victim to his insatiable appetite just as the smaller fry had done to their curiosity. When the tragedy was over we pulled out into the middle of the outer bay and waited until quiet and confidence was restored among our friends below. Meanwhile, one of the Kanakas had cut one of our biggest fish open. The Director put a dynamite cartridge into it, and then it was tied up, after which the end of a line was passed through its gills. When one of the black triangles came within a few yards of us the Director touched the end of about six inches of fuse with his cigarette and dropped it quietly overboard.

Brother Shark didn't seem to notice the little fizzy splutter which made this fish different from all others that he had eaten, or, if he did, he took no notice of it. He turned over on his side, the jaws opened, and the fish vanished.

In a few moments and for just an immeasurable fraction of a second he was the most astounded shark in the Pacific Ocean. After which came chaos for him, and a breakfast for his brethren. The pieces weren't very big, with the exception of the head, which, after a bit of a scrimmage,



was carried off by a monster who might have been his mother-in-law. The rest of the fragments disappeared in a swirl of bloody froth, and we went home to breakfast to learn the glad news that the long-awaited *Emily* had really left Noumea at last.

## XI

### *MOSTLY MOSQUITOS AND MICROBES*

THE *Emily* arrived that evening, and we fed royally on good fresh Australian beef, fried fish, and potatoes, and *compôte* of fruit, followed by fresh cream cheese, with bread and tinned butter—as usual, from Australia. In fact, if it wasn't for Australia I believe that New Caledonia would either live on tinned everything or starve, which is of course a good thing for Sydney and Newcastle.

The Doctor produced a couple of bottles of excellent Burgundy from his private cellar, and altogether we did ourselves exceeding well. The next morning the *Emily* sailed, of course, at five o'clock ; but I turned out of bed in the moonlight well contented, for my last journey but one was over. The Commandant invited me on to his verandah for a farewell consommation. After which I went with the Doctor and the Dynamiter for another

one or two at the canteen. Then we parted in as friendly a fashion as English and French ever did.

I was glad to get away, yet I left some regrets behind me. Though I had come under unpromising circumstances, every one had made me welcome, and although my stay had lengthened into something like a little exile, my visit to the Land of Wood and Iron had been both pleasant and profitable.

The Doctor I parted from with real regret. He was one of the best types of the travelled French officer and gentleman that I have ever met. At first his ideas about the Boers were hopelessly wrong, and that was all there was the matter with him; but I was the first man he had ever met who had actually lived among them, and when I left his views were considerably altered.

Just before I left, the Director of Posts and Telegraphs—every official seems to be a director of something in Caledonia—brought me the first letters that I had received in Prisonland. They had been carried by a Kanaka over the mountains from Noumea, through fifty miles of jungle-paths.

These bush-postmen have never yet been known to lose a letter. When I asked how much extra they were paid for work like this I was told that they were made to do it as a punishment—which struck me as being entirely French.

The *Emily*—may her name be blessed!—was only a steam launch multiplied by two, but she was clean and sweet, and her nose was pointed towards home. She towed two lighters loaded with dressed timber, and she took something like fifteen hours to do forty-five miles. But that mattered little. It was a delicious day, and the scenery along the coast was lovely. Moreover, you could lie down on her decks without having to change afterwards and throw your clothes overboard, and so the long hours passed pleasantly under the awning.

When at length she had puffed and panted her way into Noumea, I looked about the harbour and saw that Yellow Jack was flying more numerously than ever. The first news I learnt when I landed was that the plague was a great deal worse than the papers were allowed to say. It had begun to jump about all over the town, just as it did later on in Sydney. The Chief

of the Sanitary Commission had just been struck down by it.

The first thing I noticed as I drove from the wharf to my old quarters was the number of people in mourning. My landlady, who—I dare say under compulsion—had had her premises cleaned and disinfected, greeted me with even more than French effusion. I owed her a long bill, and she thought I was dead of the plague in some out-of-the-way spot. She nearly cried for joy when she saw me. Poor old lady, she was to be one of the next of the microbe's victims!

At dinner that night I learnt, to my intense disgust, that the Messagerie Company and the Government had established a twelve-days' quarantine on a mosquito-haunted islet in the bay for any one who wanted to travel by the monthly mail to Sydney. The principal reason for this was that the Governor was going home and wanted to be quite certain that no microbes got on board concealed about the persons of his fellow-passengers.

From my point of view it amounted to this: Twelve days on *Ile Freycinet*, four days' passage, and from eight to ten days' quarantine in Sydney

—total at least twenty-six days for a trip of a little over a thousand miles.

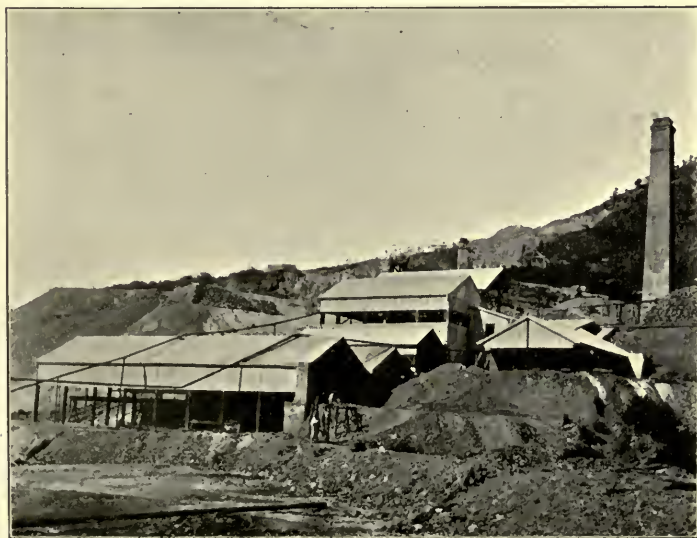
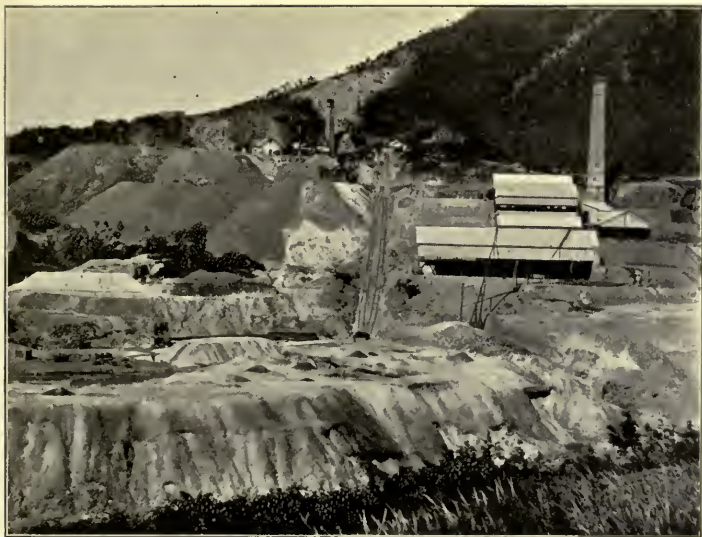
It had to be avoided somehow, and at the same time Noumea was getting every day a better place to get out of. Even Lord Dunmore, who had stuck to his offices down near the wharves while his neighbours were running away, and while the rats, driven out of destroyed buildings, were coming under his floors to die, at last admitted that things were serious, and advised me to "get" as soon as I could.

Fortunately one of the larger coast-boats had been disinfected and was put on the line again, and in her I took passage to Pam, at the north-eastern extremity of the island.

Pam is the port and headquarters of an immensely rich mining district, the property of the International Copper Company, of which his lordship is Administrator. It has been said that when Nature made New Caledonia she set herself to dump down as many ores and minerals in as small a space as possible.

She has certainly succeeded, for there is scarcely a mineral known to science that is not represented in greater or less quantities in this wonderful island.





The Mines of the International Copper Co., Pilou, New Caledonia. There is a greater variety of Metallic Ores within the area shown here than in any other region in the world.



A very clever and experienced mining expert once went over from Australia to make a survey for the International, and after an exhaustive examination he was shipped to London to make a personal report to the Board. He knew as much about mining as any one in the Southern Hemisphere, but his language and deportment were those of the bush and the mining camp. A noble lord asked him if he could give any estimate of the amount of copper, nickel, cobalt, iron, silver, gold, etc., that might be found in the Central Chain, and this was his answer :

“My lord, if you were to take all the —— minerals there are out of those —— mountains the —— island would —— well fall to pieces.”

The report was taken as satisfactory.

I brought some specimens away with me which certainly seem to bear out his estimate. They were the wonder and envy of several mining experts in Australia. One of the specimens weighs about three pounds, and I am told that it contains about a dozen distinct kinds of minerals. It didn't come out of the mine. It was just chopped off the surface for me with a pickaxe.

The mines are not at Pam. They are at Pilou,

about seven miles up the river. Here, connecting the principal mining station with the wharf, is the only other railway in Caledonia, which is run by steam. It is a narrow gauge and about five miles long.

That five miles is a journey through purgatory. The attendant demons are little black and devilishly businesslike mosquitos. Now, I thought I knew something about mosquitos. They had lived off me in many parts of the world from Delagoa Bay to Panama, and Honolulu to Guayaquil, but when I got to Pilou I found I hadn't begun to learn about them.

The air above the swamp over which the railway ran was black with them, and their song made the whole atmosphere vocal. They were all over us in a moment. They even settled on the boiler of the engine, and bit it until it whistled in its agony. We were black with them from head to foot. Clothing was no protection; and, of course, ours was pretty thin. They just stood on their heads and rammed their probosces down into our flesh, usually along the line of a vein, and sucked in our life-blood until they were too gorged to get their blood-pumps out again.

By constant sweeping with green branches we managed to keep our faces fairly clear, and do our breathing without swallowing more than a dozen at a time. Even the Kanakas, who are not as a rule a favourite article of food with mosquitos, had to go on swishing themselves with boughs to keep the little black demons out of their eyes and nose and mouth and ears.

As for me, I visited the camps and the mines, and then I fled. I was a sight which my worst enemy, if I have one, might well have looked upon with eyes of pity. I had got a touch of fever, too, in the swamp, and an illness in Pilou was too terrible for contemplation. I would not live in the place, rent free and with nothing to do but fight mosquitos, for a hundred pounds a week.

The unhappy convicts who work the mines were the most miserable lot I had seen in all Caledonia. Neither by day nor night have they any protection from the swarming pests, which, as one or two of them told me, made their lives one long misery. They sleep in open barracks without mosquito curtains over their hammocks, and by day their tormentors pursue them even down the shafts of the mine.

It was the same with the officials and their wives and children. They all looked anæmic, as though most of the blood had been sucked out of them. They were worried and nervous. Their hands had got into a way of moving mechanically towards their cheeks and necks and foreheads, the result of long and mostly vain efforts to squash mosquitos.

When we were going to have a meal a couple of fire-pots, covered with green boughs, had to be put into the room until it was full of smoke and comparatively empty of mosquitos. Then we went into the smoke, and the fire-pots were put in the doorway. I wasn't at Pilou long enough to get used to being half-cooked myself while I was eating my dinner, but even the smoke in your eyes and lungs was a more bearable affliction than the winged tormentors who seemed to be a sort of punitive discount on the vast mineral wealth of Pilou.

No one but very wicked people ought to live there, and when they die their accounts ought to be considered squared.

With eyes puffed up and almost closed; with nose and ears and lips about twice their normal





The Saloon of the Ballande liner *St. Louis*.



size; with knuckles and wrists swollen and stiff—to say nothing of a skinful of itching bumps—I got back to Pam, and on board the cargo boat on which I had booked a passage in Noumea.

We called her afterwards the Ballande liner *St. Louis*. She was an exaggeration of *La France*, and belonged to the same distinguished firm. She was bigger and, if possible, dirtier. She also smelt more, because there was a larger area for the smells to spread themselves over.

No provision had been made for the eight passengers who were doomed to travel by her. The captain had no money or credit to buy stores, and when I offered to lend him some, he declined, in case his owners should hold him responsible. The result was that the food we ate on that miserable voyage made me look back longingly to the days when I had eaten salt horse and pickled pork in the forecastle of a black-bird.

The decks were not washed down till the fifth morning, when we reached Sydney Heads. Then there was a general clean-up before the Medical Superintendent came on board, in case a worse fate than quarantine might await us. Up went

Yellow Jack again, and that afternoon saw us anchored off the quarantine station at North Head.

I have been in prisons of many sorts, but that quarantine taught me for the first time what imprisonment really means. The penalty for leaving the *St. Louis* without authority was £300 fine *and* six months' hard labour—so there we were for eight days and nights of about one hundred and fifty hours each.

On one side there was the quarantine station—about as beautiful a land and seascape as those about to die ever took a last look from at earth and sea and sky.

On the other hand, the varied beauties of "Our Harbour," with Manly Beach to the northward, North Shore with its red-roofed villas sprinkled among the trees; and, away in the dim distance, the spires and chimneys of Sydney. A couple of hours would have taken us to it, but as we looked at it with longing eyes, thinking of what a cocktail at the bar of the Australia Hotel would taste like, it might just as well have been twenty thousand miles away.

It was during those eight days of mingled dirt and discomfort, cursing, and cribbage that I

saw as curious a contrast between life and death as you might search the wide world over for.

On the starboard side, which is the right-hand side looking forward, lay the route of the excursion steamers running between Sydney and Manly Beach.

They came past at all hours of the day, and they came near enough for us to hear strains of stringed and wind instruments, which brought back memories of the dear old Thames with painful distinctness.

On the port side, with almost equal frequency, there came a green-painted, white-awned launch, flying the Yellow Flag and carrying corpses, "cases," and "contacts" from the depôt at Woolloomooloo. As she rounded into the jetty she whistled. Day and night for eight days and nights we heard that whistle—and the meaning of it was usually death. But you get hardened to all things in time, and before our durance vile ended we had got to call her the Cold Meat Boat.

One day the Medical Superintendent of the station acceded to an urgent request made by myself and a fellow-passenger. Neither of us had washed properly for six days, and so, after

a little discussion and many promises, he let us go ashore that we might enjoy ourselves under a hose. We doused each other for more than half an hour, and then we went to stretch ourselves on the beach—a silver-sanded rock-walled curve, trodden by many feet which will never tread earth again.

As we were coming back to the quay to go on board we heard that never-to-be-forgotten whistle again, and the green Death Boat swung round the corner. One of the sanitary police on the wharf put his hand up and waved us back.

In the stern there were about a dozen people sitting. Forward there was a long shapeless bundle lying on a stretcher. It was a case. The others were "contacts," friends, lodgers, and relations who had lived in the same house with the case. They had come to be isolated for ten days, so that the microbe of the Black Death might show whether or not it was in their blood.

They were taken out of the boat first. Their own feelings didn't matter, for the Black Spectre takes no account of human affections, and permits no other to do so. They were marched away to the quarters set apart for contacts. No fare-



wells were permitted, just a look that might be the last, and that was all.

Then the stretcher with the long bundle on it was lifted and carried on to the wharf. Meanwhile the ambulance backed down to the shore-end, the stretcher was put into it, and it drove away up through the trees to the hospital. The next journey of that particular "case" was to the cemetery four days afterwards.

When we got back to our floating prison I told the chief engineer what we had seen on shore, and he said in very epigrammatic French :

"Quite so! What would you? You are a human being till you take the plague; after that you are an outcast, a thing separate. You live and get better; you die and are buried that's all."

And, as it happened, the very next day brought an all-too vivid illustration of the truth of this saying. About ten in the morning we heard the "woo-hoo" of the Death Boat's whistle.

There was only one passenger this time, and he travelled in a coffin. A common two-wheeled cart backed down to where the ambulance had been the day before. The coffin was carried to it and put in just like any other sort of packing-case

might have been. The driver whipped up his horse, and we watched the cart with its load of coffin, corpse, and quicklime, trotting up the winding road which leads to the burying-ground of North Head.

I have seen many funerals in a good many places from Westminster Abbey to Woolloomooloo, but this one was the simplest and the saddest of them all.

Away on the other side of the bay, wife and children, brothers and sisters and friends were mourning—and there was the indescribable Thing, which two or three days ago had been a man, being carted away to be dropped into a twelve-foot hole in the ground—buried like a dead dog, because it had died of the Black Death instead of something else. From which you will see that the Black Death has terrors for the living even after it has claimed its dead.

## Part III

### *HOMEWARD BOUND*



# I

## "TWENTY YEARS AFTER"

EVERYTHING, even quarantine, comes to an end in time ; and so on the morning of the eighth day at anchor, and the thirteenth out from Pam, the sanitary policeman who formed our sole connection with the outside world brought with our morning letters and newspapers the joyful news that our imprisonment was to end at noon that day. Never did convicts hail the hour of their release more gladly than the passengers on board the Ballande liner *St. Louis*.

We had managed to make our durance vile tolerable by means of yarning by day, and cribbage by night. In the after saloon, an apartment measuring about sixteen feet by eight, there were four of us—three men and the wife of a mining superintendent in Pam. The miner was one of the good old colonial hard-shell type, a man of vast and varied experience, and the possessor of one of the

most luxuriant vocabularies I have ever had reason to admire in the course of many wanderings. One night, I remember, we all woke up wondering whether the ship had broken from her moorings and gone ashore or whether the Kanaka crew had mutinied. It turned out that our shipmate had discovered a rat in his bunk, and was giving his opinion as to the chances of our all dying of plague before the quarantine was over. He knew that there had been fourteen deaths from plague only a month before on the miserable old hooker, and he was considerably scared. When he told us that the rat was alive I began to laugh, whereupon he turned the stream of his eloquence upon me. He literally corruscated with profanity, and the more his adjectives multiplied the louder I laughed, and only the influence of my stable companion, a pearl-sheller and diver from Thursday Island, who had been exploring the ocean floor round New Caledonia, prevented a breach of our harmonious relations.

When I got my breath and the miner lost his, I explained that the fact of the rat being alive proved it to be absolutely harmless. It was indeed a guarantee that there was no plague on the ship.



If it had been dead and the sanitary authorities had got to know of it, it might have got us another twenty days' quarantine. Finally, it came out that the rat had bitten the miner's toe, and, as he believed, inoculated him with the plague. I suggested that whiskey was the best antidote for anything of that sort and so the proceedings terminated amicably.

My friend the diver was also a man who could tell you tales of land and sea and under-sea in language which was unhappily sometimes too picturesque to be printable. We had travelled together all the way from Noumea, and made friends before the *St. Antoine* had left the wharf. We had both been rope-haulers and climbers before the mast, and the freemasonry of the sea made us chums at once. I never travelled with a better shipmate, and if this book ever reaches him across the world I hope that it will remind him of many hours that he made pleasant during that evil time.

I have brought two somewhat curious memories out of our brief friendship.

I had not been talking to him for an hour before twenty years of hard-won education and culture of a sort disappeared, and I found myself

thinking the thoughts and speaking the speech of the fore-castle and the sailors' boarding-house : thoughts direct and absolutely honest ; and speech terse, blunt, and equally honest, for among the toilers of the sea it is not permitted to use language to conceal one's thoughts. The man who is found out doing that hears himself dissected and discussed with blistering irony garnished with epithets which stick like barbed arrows, and of such was our conversation on the *St. Antoine* and the *St. Louis* ; not exactly drawing-room-talk, but of marvellous adaptability to the true description of men and things.

On the morning of our release as we were taking our after-breakfast walk and looking for the last time on that hatefully beautiful little cove at North Head, I said to him :

"Well, I'll have to stop being a shell-back to-night, and get into civilisation again."

"I suppose you will," he said ; and then he proceeded to describe civilisation generally in a way that would have healthily shocked many most excellent persons. I thoroughly agreed with him, and, curiously enough, although our experiences had been none of the most pleasant, and I had



The Quarantine Station, North Head, Sydney.



had anything but a succession of picnics during my stay in New Caledonia, I was already beginning to feel sorry that I had to go back to civilisation and dine in dress-clothes and a hard-boiled shirt—which brings me to my second memory.

For nearly a month we had been living on food that a Kaffir in the Kimberley compounds would turn his nose up at, and for fourteen days on board the *St. Louis* we had eaten dirt of many French descriptions. Everything was dirty. Not even the insides of the loaves were clean. The galley, where the disguised abominations were cooked, was so foul that a whiff of its atmosphere on passing was enough to spoil the appetite of a starving man. The cook was to match. The steward who waited on us was willing and obliging, but remiss in the matter of washing both himself and his crockery. The chief steward on French ships is called *maitre d'hôtel*, and by this title we addressed him. On shore we should have said “here, you,” or something of that sort, but on the *St. Louis* he was a person of importance, for he had the key of the store-room and was open to judicious bribery.

We had worried through our last dirty *déjeuner* on board, and preparations were being made for getting the anchors up. The captain and the mate had each put on a clean collar, and the chief engineer was wringing his hands and dancing about the forecastle because the donkey-engine had gone wrong and only fizzed feebly when it should have been getting the cable in.

"Well, thank God," I said to my diver friend, "we shall have a decent dinner to-night! You are going to dine with me at the Australia. We'll have a real cocktail at the bar, only one, for it won't do to spoil a precious appetite, then we'll eat our way through the menu and drink champagne. Looks like heaven, doesn't it?"

This is of course only an expurgated version of what I really said. His reply consisted of a finely embroidered comparison between the Australia Hotel and the *St. Louis*, calculated to start every rivet in her hull.

Well, we got away from our anchorage and were towed up to Sydney. We took two of the finest appetites on the Australian continent up with us. We had that cocktail. We sat down in the dining-room of the Australia at a



table covered with the first clean table-cloth we had seen for a month and glittering with polished glass and shining silver. The dinner was as good a one as you will get anywhere between Sydney Harbour and King George's Sound—and we couldn't eat it! We fooled about with the courses, trying to believe that we were hungry and having a real treat, but it was no good. We had lost our taste for clean, well-cooked food, and our palates and digestions were hopelessly vitiated. Course after course went away hardly touched. We said many things to each other across the table in decently lowered tones, and ended by satisfying our hunger and thirst with bread and butter and champagne!

After dinner I renewed my acquaintance with the Doctor and the purser of the steam-roller *Alameda*, and they imparted the unwelcome information that the regular liners were not booking any passengers from Sydney lest Melbourne and Adelaide, Albany and Perth might refuse them admittance, or, at any rate, decline to take passage in a ship from a plague port. Moreover, it was possible that Sydney passengers might be quarantined at every port. Personally, I had had all the

quarantine I wanted, and so I was not sorry to accept the other alternative which was to go across to Melbourne and Adelaide by train, and thence by a boat to Freemantle. This would give me time to have a glimpse at Western Australia before picking up the *Messagerie* liner at Albany. Unhappily, as I have said, we ran up against the plague again at Freemantle, and the inevitable delay, combined with the very leisurely gait of the West Australian trains, made it just impossible for me to visit the gold-fields without missing my steamer.

One of the first people to welcome me back to Sydney was my very good friend and fellow-voyager from Honolulu, the *Accidental American*, and with him and his wife I travelled to Melbourne.

After we had passed the customs and changed trains and gauges at Albury the journey began to take on a new, or, rather, an old interest for me. Twenty years before I had tramped up through the bush from Melbourne to the Murray after taking French leave of the lime-juicer in which I had made my first miserable voyage from Liverpool to Australia. I had halved the fifteen shillings, with which I started, with a

penniless "old chum" in exchange for his company and experience, and then turned the other seven and sixpence into about seventy pounds, and, on the strength of my wealth, travelled back to Melbourne first-class.

Now I was doing it again, and as the express swung past the little station, which I had reached after an all-night tramp across the ranges, I found it to be a good deal less changed than I was. Indeed, save for a few new houses scattered about the clearing, it was just as it was when I pitched my swag down on a bench before the hotel, put my blackened billy beside it, and ordered my last breakfast in the bush.

At Melbourne we put up at Menzies, and one afternoon I took my friend down to Spencer Street to pay a visit to the hotel that I had last stayed in—the Sailors' Home. Here again nothing was altered. The very cubicle I slept in twenty years before looked as though I had only just turned out of the little blue-and-white counterpaned bed, and outside my yester-self, to coin the only word that seems to fit, was loafing about in beerless and penniless idleness "waiting for a ship."

"There I am as I was," I said; "how do you like me?"

"Not a little bit, Griff," he replied in the terse speech of his fortuitously native land. "I guess if you were to come like that among the friends you have now you'd look mighty like a dirty deuce in a new deck of cards."

The next morning I went over to Williamstown to have a look at the scene of my old escapade, the only one, by the way, which ever brought me into unpleasant relations with the police, for in those days breaking your indentures was a matter of imprisonment. Happily they did not catch me. I found the old Railway Hotel, known, aforetime to officers and apprentices as the Hen and Chickens, since it was kept by a dear old Scotchwoman assisted by four charming daughters with one or all of whom every apprentice in port was supposed to be in love. It was through the kindly offices of one of them that I had saved my kit and dodged the police.

I sat in the little parlour on the same sofa I had sat on that memorable night; opposite was the same old piano on which one or other of our charmers used to accompany our shouting

sea-songs, and there beside it was the little cupboard in the wall in which my superfluous wardrobe had been stowed away. Not a thing was altered, I believe the very table-cloth was the same, and the patch of vacant ground opposite, across which I had bolted at the penultimate moment to catch the last train to Melbourne, was still unbuilt on; and there was I, still a wanderer, though of a different sort, wanting only the old faces and the old voices to be able to persuade myself that the twenty changing years had begun with the last night's dream and ended with the morning's awaking.

## II

### *DEMOS AND DEAR MONEY*

NO doubt it was due to the very wide difference between the two points of view from which I had seen Australia and the Australians, but I must confess that my first impressions were more pleasant than my second. Naturally the happy-go-lucky-sailor lad who thought that the earth was his and the fulness thereof as long as he had a shilling in his pocket and a square meal ahead of him, would not look upon things in general with the same eyes that I did after twenty years of changing fortunes and the gradual fading of the "golden dreams of trustful twenty,"—or eighteen, to be more exact.

In those days I was, almost of necessity, a practical democrat living in a democracy which neither had the time nor the inclination to bother about politics; but now many experiences in many lands had taught me that democracy of



the political sort is more pleasant to read about than to rub shoulders with !

America has an aristocracy of blood, brains, and money which looks with open contempt upon politics, and has no more connection with politicians than is involved in the payment of bribes by its agents. Australia has no such aristocracy, and everybody apparently goes into politics. In America democracy is a political fiction, and the person whom political advocates and managers call the working man is kept in his place by methods more or less moral but still effective. The real rulers of the United States believe, with Bismarck, that popular government of a country resembles control of a household by the nursery.

In Australia the democracy really does rule. It is the worst-mannered country that I have ever travelled through, I mean, of course, as regards the people you are brought into contact with in the ordinary course of travel. Every man is as good as another unless he happens to be an official, and then he is a good deal better—in his own opinion, and much worse in that of the wanderer from other lands.

Of course one meets, as I did, just as charming

people in Australia as you do anywhere else, but these are the exceptions. The American, as I found him, no matter what his rank in life, was a born gentleman, kindly and courteous, yet prompt and practical, and just as nice a fellow whether he was inviting you to a banquet or giving you a shave.

Now, with all due deference to Miss Australia's many physical and mental charms and her rapidly increasing stature, I venture to suggest that she would not be the worse for a few lessons in social deportment. At present she appears to be rather in danger of becoming the tomboy of the international nursery. The chief trouble with her seems to be that she is so desperately anxious not to appear servile that she forgets to be civil.

One cause of this singular lack of manners in the conduct of every-day affairs may be found in the fact that the vast majority of parents—and particularly those belonging to the so-called working-class—consider that the end and aim of their children's education should be the obtaining of "a good government billet." The natural result is the creation of a huge army of officials who have never had any training in the social ways

of the world, who know little or nothing of business in the wider sense of the term, and whose education compels them either to do everything according to official routine or to leave it undone.

The fact is that Australia is beginning to suffer from too much government. It is the most over-governed commonwealth in the world. As every old Colonial knows, it is the interest of a large majority of the voters to have a governmental machine with as many wheels in it as possible. There is a curious likeness here between the middle- and lower-class Australian, if I may be pardoned for using such a heretical word as class in such a connection, and the Frenchman of the same social grade. To both the highest ideal of personal ambition is well-paid employment under government with a pension to follow ; whence it comes that both these utterly dissimilar nations are cursed with an ever-increasing generation of office-seekers whose only object in life is to live as well as possible out of the taxes.

The Australian Commonwealth is composed of young and lusty nations which have bred a magnificent race of men and women ; but they have also developed a form of government which is

far too broadly based upon that specious absurdity, the equality of man. In fact, in Australia, they have gone farther, for another tenet of their political creed is the equality of women with each other and with men. One of the natural results of this is that, although the best sort of Australian wife is almost invariably the political ally of her husband, her housemaid and her cook and washer-woman, who of course greatly outnumber her and are much more receptive of the wild-cat theories of the demagogue, have votes also, and use them—frequently with weird effect. Education, experience, social standing, and personal character go for nothing. A vote is a vote, no matter who gives it. In fact this fundamentally hopeless system is worked out to such a deplorably logical extremity that those women who, through misfortune or intent, have crossed the borders of what we call here respectable society have the lodger-vote in Australia. This fact is, I believe, unique in the records of democracy from the days of Cleon until now.

It is, of course, only in the ordinary development of human affairs that such a system of election should not produce the best of all possible rulers.

Some time after my return to England I wanted

to write an article for an English daily newspaper on the subject of Australian Politics. The editor declined to have anything to do with it. He thought I was, as they say, talking through the back of my hat, until I asked him whether he thought the Australian politician was anything like the men whom he associated with Downing Street? He seemed to think that they were about on the same level, I then asked him whether he could conceive Lord Salisbury, Lord Rosebery, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain playing poker with travellers and strangers in a London club, and then having to be telegraphed to by the said strangers for the money they had lost to them? He said he couldn't. I said it was a fact, and so it is. That is the difference between Imperial and Colonial politics and politicians—from which it will be seen that there is no comparison to be drawn between the more or less efficient statesmen whom we manage somehow to get into power in this country, and the person whom the male and female votes of the Australian Commonwealth puts into office over there.

Some one once said that any government is good enough for the people who can stand it. That is



true of all countries, and it is so in a peculiar sense of the empire which all good Englishmen hope will some day develop out of the newly-made Australian Commonwealth. But before that happens Australia will have to evolve an aristocracy of some sort. The old territorial magnates of twenty-five and thirty years ago have been gradually squeezed out. Some of them, the fortunate ones who located themselves on well-watered territories, and others who found minerals under their sheep pastures are still the highest class of Australian society. The rest have seen their estates eaten into by the cockatoo selector and the person who went out with an assisted passage to a free grant of land in the hope of being bought off or selling his "improvements." This process almost destroyed the best aristocracy that Australia could have possessed, and the democratic vote finally wrecked it, for your true democrat never sees further than the day after to-morrow.

In fact, his political horizon is usually bounded by the next sunset, and the natural result has been that the balance of political power in Australia has been transferred from those who have put brains, capital, and enterprise into the country,



to those who had nothing but votes to invest—and votes to-day are very cheap in Australia.

The logical outcome of such a condition of affairs is that what the uneducated and irresponsible majority want they get. It is not a question of general utility or national prosperity. If the government of a colony does not do what the more ignorant mass of voters want, that government has either to give in or get out. As a rule ministers give in that they may stop in, because places are snug and salaries liberally proportioned to the labours which earn them.

The observant wanderer picks up proofs of this all the time that he is travelling, and the most significant of these is found in the very thinly veiled hostility of the various colonies towards each other. If you are in Sydney you must not say too much in praise of Melbourne; just as, when you are in New York it isn't wise to say too much about Chicago; or, if you happen to be the guest of a club in San Francisco, you had better not descant too eloquently on the culture of Boston. Still, in the United States there is a healthy and unrestrained rivalry between these and many other cities. There is free trade from

Maine to Mexico, and from New Orleans to Talama. In fact, as an American Senator once said in defence of the first tariff, America within its own borders is the biggest free-trading country in the world. For instance, throughout the length and breadth of the United States you can communicate with other people by letter or telegram on the same rate. Now, when I got to Albany, Western Australia, I found that I owed a small account of one and sixpence to a firm in Sydney. The money order cost me two and ninepence. Again, all over the civilised world, saving Australia, a Bank of England note is worth either its face value or little more. It happened that when I landed in Sydney I had £80 in £10 Bank of England notes. I went to two or three banks to get them changed, and I found that I could only get gold for them at a discount of two and sixpence on the £5, or £2 in all. I then went to the Comptoire d'Escompt, in Pitt Street, and got my £80 changed into English gold for five shillings.

When I came to inquire into the matter further I found that the Australian banks had entered into a sort of conspiracy to defraud the unsuspecting

traveller who ventures to bring the best paper currency in the world into the Australian colonies. For instance, you pay a deposit into the Sydney branch of an Australian bank, you take its notes for the amount that you may need in travelling, say, from Sydney to Melbourne, and when you present those notes at a branch *of the same bank* you are charged two and a half per cent. for cashing them. In other words, the bank goes back on its own paper to the extent of five shillings on the £10-note. This seems bad enough, but my friend the Accidental American told me of something even worse. He was representing one of the biggest manufacturing firms in the United States. Their credit was as good as gold anywhere. He paid a deposit in Auckland into the Bank of New Zealand, believing that his cheque would be good for its face value throughout the colonies, but when he tried to draw cheques on the branches of the Bank of New Zealand in Australia he was charged two and a half per cent. discount!

I once had a similar experience in the Transvaal, but that was only what one might have expected under the then governmental conditions. I was

in a hostile country and I didn't look for anything better, but to run up against the same swindle in a British colony was somewhat of a shock. After that, when I wanted any money on my letter of credit, I took gold because I didn't see the force of giving English paper at par for colonial paper at two and a half per cent. discount.

I also noticed that if you complain about this sort of thing in Sydney they put the blame on Melbourne, and if you are travelling further, Melbourne puts the blame on Adelaide, and so on, and from Adelaide they will refer you back to Auckland, while Perth will tell you that it is the only really honest city in all Australasia.

There is, however, one subject upon which all the Australian colonies appear to be absolutely agreed. This is the relative importance of work and play. They mostly play at work and work at play, especially the officials. Australia seems to me to have almost as many legal holidays as you find feast-days in Spain, and an Australian would as soon go to work on a holiday as a member of the Lord's Day Observance Society would go to a music-hall on a Sunday, unless, of course, he happened to be on the Continent.

Still there is a considerable difference between the amount of work which you can get done in the several capitals of the Commonwealth.

I came home with a man who might be described as the Universal Provider of Australia, and he told me that he could do more business in Melbourne in a day than he could in a week in Sydney, or in a fortnight in Adelaide or Perth. My American friend told me that he could do more business in the States in an hour than he could do in a day anywhere in Australia.

One reason for this, no doubt, is the climate. "That tired feeling" is very prevalent, and it affects the native-born much more than the home-born. In fact, British-born parents at fifty and sixty have more energy than their sons and daughters have at thirty and forty. All the conditions in Australia are against indoor work, and in favour of outdoor play. Hence the new Commonwealth's physical vigour is considerably in excess of its mental energy.

Another very serious feature in present-day Australian life is the craze for gambling. Of course most of us would like to make money without working for it if we could, but with the



Australian this desire amounts to a perfect passion. Almost every other tobacconist's shop is the branch office of a bookmaker, and you can go in and plank your money and take your ticket without the slightest fear of legal consequences. As for mining stocks, you scarcely hear anything else talked about unless there happens to be a horse race, a cycle meeting, or a cricket match on. This is, of course, only one of the failings of youth, and in some respects Miss Australia is very young. Still, now that she is growing up into a nation, she would do well to put something of a curb on her youthful ardour for playing. Sport of some sort is an essential both of individual and national manhood, but colonies don't grow into nations on race-courses and cricket-fields any more than men can become permanently wealthy by laying and taking odds, or speculating in futures.



### III

#### *A COSMOPOLITAN COLONY*

**I**T must not be gathered from what I have said in the last two chapters that it is all play and no work in Australia. There is a great deal too much play, and far too keen an interest in winning money instead of making real wealth ; but still Australia boasts of splendid industries which she is working to real and lasting profit.

While I was in Adelaide I renewed my acquaintance with a lady and gentleman with whom I had come into contact by a lucky chance during a coaching trip through the Blue Mountains and New South Wales, while I was waiting for the steamer from Sydney to Noumea. During that trip which, by the way, is one of the most delightful that you can take in any of the Five Continents, I made the interesting discovery that they not only knew me much better than I knew them, but that they had even named their house

after their favourite character in one of my stories. It was through their kindness that I had an opportunity of realising by personal experience the wonderful development of what bids fair to be Australia's greatest and, in the best sense, most profitable industry. The commercial fabric of Australia rests upon wool, wine, wheat, and gold, and not the least of these is wine.

One day I received an invitation to go and spend three days at Seppeltsfield, which is the centre of one of the largest and most flourishing wine districts in Australia. Here I became the guest of Mr. Benno Seppelt, whose father was the pioneer of wine-growing in South Australia. It was here, too, that I found the most brilliant triumph in cosmopolitan colonisation that I had seen in the course of many wanderings.

We went partly by train and partly by a coach, which landed us after dark on a desperately wet night at a little township about eight miles from the vineyard. Here, owing to a telegraphic mistake, we found no conveyance to take us on to Seppeltsfield, so we put up at just such a bush hotel as I had been wont to sleep at twenty years before when I happened to have the money for

bed and breakfast. The principal attraction of the hostelry was a bagatelle-table on which Shem, Ham, and Japheth might have practised. The bagatelle-room was evidently the favourite lounge of the youth of the township, and the Accidental American and I passed a most enjoyable hour playing under the instruction of these gentle youths who would have been considerably astonished if they had seen some of my friend's performances on a billiard-table. Everybody's business in Australia is also everybody else's, wherein Australia does not differ very much from other parts of the world, and the interest that our audience took in us was almost as flattering as their absolutely unrestrained remarks on our play were occasionally the reverse. We began as novices, and gratefully accepted the very freely given hints as to our shortcomings and the way to improve our game. No game, played on that ancient gambling machine, ever improved so quickly, and the talk among our instructors, when they realised that we had been fooling them, gave me the impression that they really regarded us as a couple of sharps who had come down from Adelaide with the intention of cleaning the country-side out.

The next morning the wagonette came over from Seppeltsfield and I began to have my object-lesson in colonisation. The country here was very different to what I had seen in the bush at other times and other places. In fact the bush was bush no longer; all was rolling farmland, cleanly cleared and well fenced, arable land alternating with orchards, vegetable-gardens, and tree-belts disposed so as to give due protection to the young crops and fruit-trees. Everything was trim, neat, and prosperous-looking. The white houses, surrounded by their broad verandahs, were very different to the selectors' cabins which I had seen up country on my last visit to Australia, and their surroundings were rather those of an English country house hundreds of years old, than of a country which forty years ago was uninhabited scrub.

Then came the vineyards. There are between two and three thousand acres of them round Seppeltsfield, and every acre seemed to me to be as well kept as an English nursery garden.

This is the history of them, and incidentally of the other wine-growing districts in South Australia.

As long ago as 1829, which, for Australia, is quite ancient history, a Mr. Robert Gouger began the colonisation of South Australia. His idea was to parcel out the land into small lots and offer government assistance to people who were ready to tackle the task of subduing the wilderness. He failed to get the amount of capital to carry his ideas into practice; the government, as governments did in those days, gave him the cold shoulder, and, for the time being, his projects fell to the ground. Five years later the South Australian Association was formed. Mr. Gouger was the principal organiser of it. Then followed more correspondence with the government, and more of the usual trouble with the circumlocutory departments, and finally the South Australian Bill was brought before the British Parliament. One of the chief supporters of the Bill in the House of Lords was the Victor of Waterloo, and the first ship which landed a company of emigrants on the shores of South Australia was named the *Duke of York*. As these lines are being written, the Duke of Cornwall and York is travelling through the new-born Commonwealth of Australia, as the representative of the Emperor-King to



give the Royal and Imperial sanction to the youngest, and by no means the least vigorous of the daughter-nations of the Empire. Curiously enough, too, it happened that in 1838 Mr. George Fife Angus, Chairman of the South Australian Company, brought out a company of two hundred German emigrants in a ship named the *Prince George*.

After them came more Germans, then Frenchmen and Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, Swedes and Norwegians, English, Scotch, and Irish ; the scrub began to disappear, and the wilderness to blossom, not exactly as the rose, but as tobacco plantations. The tobacco was a rank failure in more senses than one. It grew luxuriantly, but its flavour was such that it was very much more fitted for poisoning the insects which settled on the vines which succeeded it than for filling those functions which Calverley has so exquisitely described.

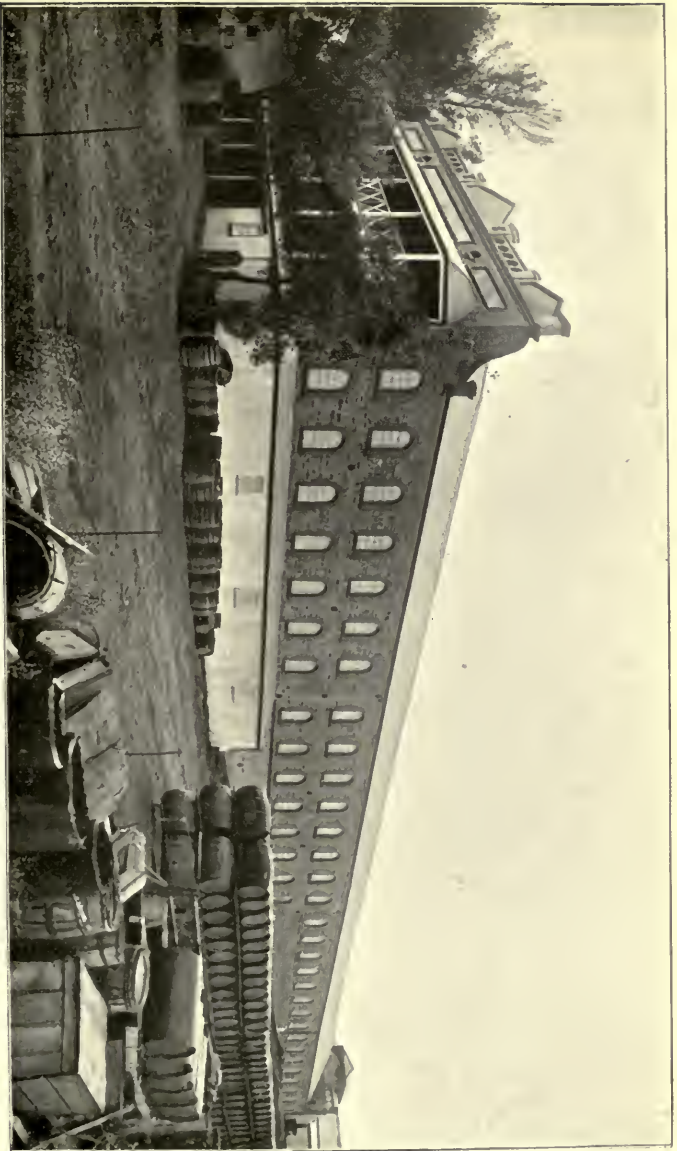
In '51, when the tidings of the great gold discoveries in Victoria were drawing fortune-seekers to Australian shores from the uttermost ends of the earth, the father of my host at Seppeltsfield came into the Collingrove district and planted a vineyard which was about an acre







The Storage House at Seppelsfield, forty years ago.



The Present Storage House through which nearly a million gallons pass every year.



in extent. Not even the luckiest of all the argonauts of the fifties ever pegged out a claim that yielded as much solid and ever-increasing profit as that little patch of land in the South Australian scrub. In those days Adelaide was a pleasant little town of about fifteen thousand inhabitants ; the capital of a province containing sixty-six thousand souls. Now it is a stately city with between forty and fifty thousand inhabitants, the capital of a colony with a population of four hundred thousand.

Mr. Seppelt's acre of vineyard has grown into more than two thousand, and its produce has increased to eight hundred thousand gallons of matured wine, to say nothing of vinegar and brandy. Every year two thousand tons of grapes come in from the vinelands which lie for eight miles round Seppeltsfield, to pass through the crushers and the winery into the great vats of the cellars, and thence into the casks in which their juice is shipped to lands which have never seen the Southern Cross.

After I had been through the whole process of Australian wine-making from the grape-crushers—Australian wine is not trodden out of the grape

by the same process that still obtains in France, Spain, and Portugal—to the laboratory in which samples of every kind of wine are tested in order to make sure that the process of sterilisation is perfect ; and after I had tasted ports and sherries, Madeiras, Hocks, Moselles, and certain specialities native to the vineyard, I said to my host the evening before we had to start away in the grey dawn to catch the train at Freeling :

“I have learnt a good deal in the last week, but I want you to tell me now how you managed to put your wines on to the European market and get a sale for them against the competition of the French, German, and Spanish wines which had had the vogue for centuries, their vineyards are all within five hundred miles of London, for instance, and here you’re ten thousand miles away. How did you manage it ?”

This chapter is not an advertisement of Australian wines in general or of the products of Seppeltsfield in particular, and therefore I shall not say everything that he told me, but the nett result came to this : When the wine-growing industry of Australia began to get a bit too big for Australia’s consumption, and when it was found that varieties



of European vines produced wines of delicately differentiated flavours, it became a question where markets were to be found for the products of an industry which was growing much more rapidly than the native consumption.

When they found the solution of this problem the Australian wine-growers did one of the best strokes of business that ever was done within the confines of real business. By real business, I mean honest business. Those who know a great deal more about the subject than I will see much more meaning in those two words than perhaps I do. If Australian wine was going to make its way in the markets of the world it had to be wine; in other words, those who made it had to rely for their success and for the interest on the capital and the brains that they had put into the work upon a reversion to principles as old as the days of Solomon. They had to make wine from grapes and nothing else. Their rivals in the European markets had already learnt everything there was to be known about fortifying and flavouring and chemical essences. They knew how, for instance, German potato spirit could be turned into seven-year-old brandy in a few weeks, and how sherry

which had never been within a hundred miles of a vineyard could be made such a perfect counterfeit of the original fluid that a custom's expert couldn't tell the difference between a cask worth sixty pounds and one worth six. They made many failures, but in the end they not only got into the European markets, but actually out-sold the home wine-growers who had had hundreds of years start of them.

The Australian grape goes into the crusher as grape it comes out as grape-juice, and as grape-juice it crosses the seas and makes its appearance in bottles and flagons on our tables. It has been fermented and sterilised and that is all, and it is not too much to say that, saving these two necessary processes, when you drink a glass of Australian wine, red or white, still or sparkling, you are actually drinking the juice of the grape and nothing else; wherefore it may be fairly said that the development of the Australian wine industry from very small beginnings, as, for instance, from that one acre first planted with vines at Seppeltsfield into the two thousand odd acres of to-day yielding two thousand tons of grapes and eight hundred thousand gallons of wine a year, is just about as good a proof as



Grape-crushing by machinery at Seppeltsfield. The Grapes from which Australian Wine is made are never touched by hand (or foot) after the process of Wine-making has begun.



one can get that honesty is sometimes the best policy even in business.

Happily there was no speculation about the wine industry in Australia. If this were also true of her gold-mines and her wool-crops she would be a good deal richer and more honestly wealthy than she is.

I have seen French colonists in French colonies, Germans in German colonies, and colonists of many nationalities under the alien flags of the South American Republics, where, as a rule, they do a great deal better than in their own colonies, if they have any, but never have I seen such a perfect realisation of the ideal of cosmopolitan colonisation as I saw during my stay at Seppeltsfield.

Day after day we drove out along broad roads through the pleasant vineyards and farmlands which lay under the ranges that shielded them from the hot north winds, and every hour or so we pulled up in a village which might have been picked up by superhuman hands out of Germany, or France, or Holland, Ireland, Scotland, or England, and just put down there in the midst of what forty years ago was the South Australian Wilderness.

My host was a German and the son of a German, and he has nine sons, all good Australians, true

sons of the soil, worthy citizens of the empire who have found all that men seek to find within the wide confines of the Pax Britannica.

I have a certain reason for using that phrase. I had just come from a French colony which, in the national sense, could only be described as a house divided against itself. There was the conflict between bond and free, between French and English, Australians, Germans, Jews, naturalised foreigners, and those who were still wondering which side of the international fence it would pay them best to sit on, but in the pleasant country about Seppeltsfield I found all the elements of international unity and none of discord.

Within that eight-mile radius there was an epitome of Europe. In one township you might have closed your eyes for a moment of forgetfulness, opened them again and seen yourself in a German town not very far from the banks of the Rhine. Having a little German at my disposal, I accepted the illusion and found myself drinking good lager beer out of the same old glasses that I had drunk it ten years before in the Fatherland, and listening to just the same quaintly turned conversation that I had listened to and joined in during

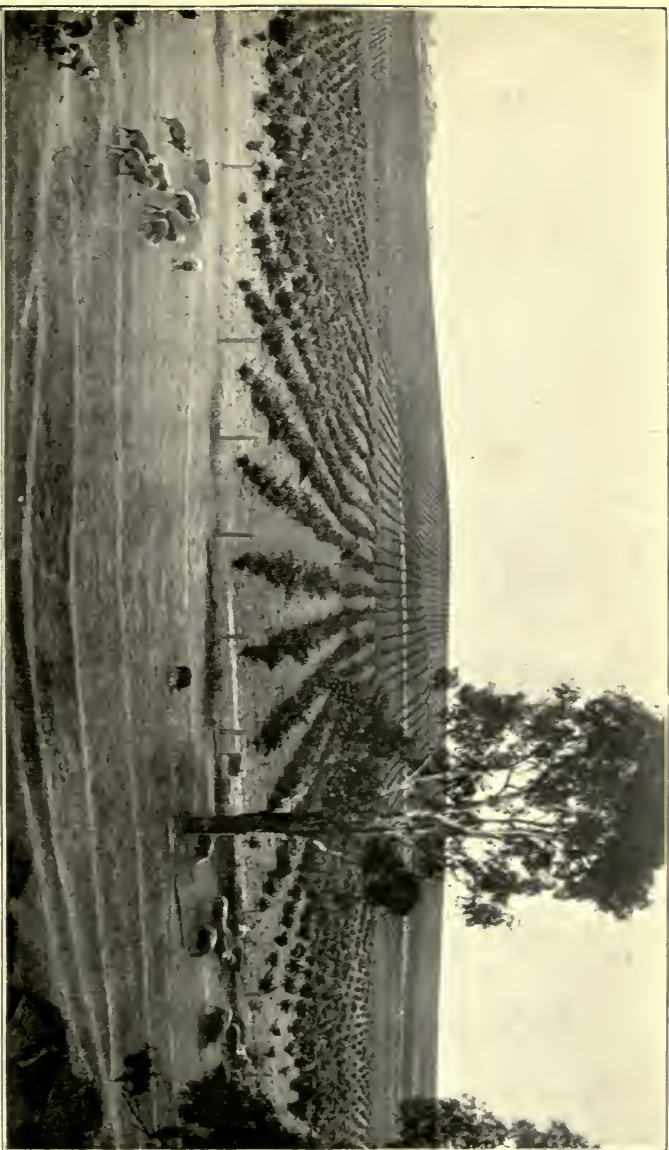


a walking tour down the Valley of the Weser and over the Hartz Mountains. The houses were built in the same way, the same beer was drunk to the same toasts and with the same old-world choruses, and I and the Accidental American played a game for the championship of England and America on just such a kegel-bahn as you could find behind any country hotel in Germany. I won because I didn't laugh quite as much as my opponent did.

At the end of another drive I found myself in France listening to the soft speech of the Côte d'Or and drinking the wine of the country which might have been sent that day by telegraph. A few miles farther on we were in Ireland. I am not prepared to say that the mountain dew was actually distilled on Irish hillsides, but it was very like the original brew, and the brogue was as rich and pure as any that you would hear between Dublin and Dingle Bay.

Men and women of many nationalities were there, founding their own fortunes and helping to found those of an Empire of To-morrow, but everywhere you heard the English speech, and recognised the self-restraint and the quiet orderly manners of the

Anglo-Saxon, for though these colonists had come from many lands and had known many different governments they had all come under the influence of that magical power which the Anglo-Saxon alone seems to possess, the power of making all men his fellow-citizens and friends if he can once get them on his own land and under his own flag. In Europe these people would have been enemies, actual or potential; in their own colonies they would have been discontented and home-sick, longing only for the day of their return with a trifling competence; here they were just neighbours working out their destinies side by side on a soil that was common to all, and under a rule which is perhaps the most perfect that the wit of man has yet devised for the welding together of conflicting human interests. If I could only have brought my good friend the Director of the Administration of New Caledonia to Seppeltsfield, and taken him for a six days' driving tour through that cosmopolitan collection of townships, I think he would have understood more completely than he did what I meant when I said to him on the verandah of his house in Noumea the day before I sailed :



A Vineyard at Seppeltsfield, South Australia.



“The Latin nations have colonies, but they have not yet learnt how to colonise.”

I left South Australia with a regret that was fully equalled by the pleasure with which I had taken leave of Noumea, and that is saying a good deal. From Port Adelaide we trundled round the coast in an exaggerated edition of the old steam-roller that had brought us across the Pacific. The only interesting event on the six days' passage was a scare which the Accidental American innocently raised by developing a sore throat and a little swelling of the glands of the neck. Of course the rumour that he had brought the plague from Sydney went like wildfire through the ship, and I, as his nurse, was looked upon with undisguised suspicion. When I brought him up for a stroll on deck just before we reached Albany our fellow-passengers very kindly gave us half the deck to ourselves. I had tried to explain that the period of incubation was twelve days at the outside, and that hence, as we were nearly a month out from Sydney, we could no more have brought the plague from Port Jackson than we could have done from San Francisco ; but it was no good, and when the sanitary officers came on board at

Freemantle with the news that the dreaded visitor had got there before us, I think nine-tenths of the passengers would have been well content to see us walked off to quarantine.

In the end the doctor passed us without a stain upon our sanitary character, and our baggage was put into a lighter, tightly sealed up and battened down, and then fumigated. One of our lady-passengers had a pet canary in a cage and there was much discussion as to what should be done with it. Its constitution would not stand fumigation, and yet the law said that nothing was to go into the colony without either medical examination or disinfection. I presume the Doctor must have compromised either with his conscience or with the lady, for the last I saw of the suspected bird was on the quay, where it was chirping a merry defiance of sanitary regulations, on the top of a truck load of baggage which had neither been inspected nor disinfected.

Sanitary officials seem to have the same kind of ideas all over the world. In Noumea they burnt down the house of the first white man who died of the plague, but they allowed his furniture to be sold by auction and spread over



the town. At Freemantle they fumigated your steamer trunk and your Gladstone-bag, but they allowed steerage passengers to walk off with swags and bundles which might have held any number of millions of microbes for all they knew.

Western Australia is a very wonderful young country, and when it settles down to real business and discovers that it is better to get gold than to gamble in gold shares, it will do great things. It will also be the better for the abolition of its ridiculous system of protection. Some parts of it will one day be great fruit-growing districts and by way of developing these the government impose a big duty on fruit from other colonies, for instance, Tasmanian apples were selling in Perth and Freemantle at a shilling a pound, although they can be brought across the world and sold in London for fivepence. Meanwhile, the Westralian sells his fruit at artificial prices, having no competition to worry about. While the import duty enables him to put his prices up fifty per cent. he is quite content to produce half what he could have done. In fact it was this problem of protection which kept Western Australia aloof from federation for such a long

time. Some day, when intercolonial free trade follows after federation, the Westralian will find his new conditions not quite so pleasant, but a good deal more healthily stimulating.

Westralia is popularly described in other colonies as the land of sin, sand, sore eyes, sorrow, and Sir John Forrest. Sir John Forrest was one of the men who discovered it. He is now its premier. He also discovered the gold-fields; and he has the loudest voice I ever heard even on a politician. What his connection with his other alliterative titles of his adopted land have been I could not discover. They are most probably creations of the luxuriant fancy of other politicians who would be very glad to have made as much out of the country as he has done.

Westralians are called by other colonials "sand-groppers," and to this they reply with fine irony by describing all other Australians as, "T'other-Siders," or "dwellers on the other side of Nowhere." Young nations are after all very like young children, they all possess the finest countries on earth and it is only right that they should do so, if they didn't think so they would go somewhere else, and so new nations would never get made.

On the whole I am afraid I must say that the new Australia did not quite come up to the expectations that I had based on my memories of the old ; but I don't suppose that fact will trouble Australia any more than the lack of appreciation of a once distinguished poet and dramatist troubled the Atlantic Ocean. One thing is certain, no country which breeds such men and women as you find from Brisbane to Freemantle can help being great some day ; and when Miss Australia settles down a little more seriously to work she will begin to grow very great indeed.

At Albany I found the long, white, graceful shape of the *Messagerie* liner *Australien* lying on the smooth waters of St. George's Sound, and in her I made as pleasant a homeward trip as the most fastidious of globe-trotters could wish for. I have often been amused by the pathetic appeals of untravelled Englishmen on behalf of British steamer lines. Such an appeal usually ends with reflections on the patriotism of British travellers who patronise foreign ships. The fact is that the boot is on the other leg. Why are not the British companies patriotic enough to make their

boats as pleasant to travel in as French, and German, and American boats are? Travellers whose journeys are counted by tens of thousands of miles want to do their travelling as pleasantly as possible, and the pleasantest ship to journey in, is the one that has the fewest regulations. On the Messagerie boats you will find none that are not absolutely essential to the proper discipline of the ship and the comfort of your fellow-passengers. While you are on board you are treated as a welcome guest, and not as an intruder whose presence is tolerated because your passage money is necessary to make dividends. You are also looked upon as a reasonable being, capable of taking care of yourself and ordering your comings and goings within decent limits, not as a child who mustn't sit up playing cards after a certain hour, and who is not to be trusted with the management of an electric light in the small hours of the tropical night when you can't sleep and want to read. In short, the principal reason why experienced travellers prefer foreign lines to British is simply the fact that they like to be treated as grown men and women, and not as children or irresponsible lunatics. It is not a question of patriotism

at all, it is one of commercial consideration on the one side and comfort and convenience on the other.

The first thing we heard when we reached Marseilles was the welcome news that the tide of war had turned, and Mafeking was relieved.

Our company in the saloon was about half French and half English and Australian, and a more friendly crowd it would have been difficult to find afloat. We had had the usual concert the night before, and wound up with the Marseillaise and God Save the Queen, and when we set up the champagne for the last time in the smoking-room and drank to B.P. and his merry men, the only man who declined to join in was, I regret to say, an Irishman. He was as jolly a *compagnon de voyage* and as good-hearted a man as you would wish to meet in a ten-thousand-mile trip; but on that particular subject he was a trifle eccentric.

When I left the *Australien* I looked upon Yellow Jack, as I hope, for the last time, for it ever a man was heart-sick of the sight of a piece of bunting I was of that miserable little yellow oblong.



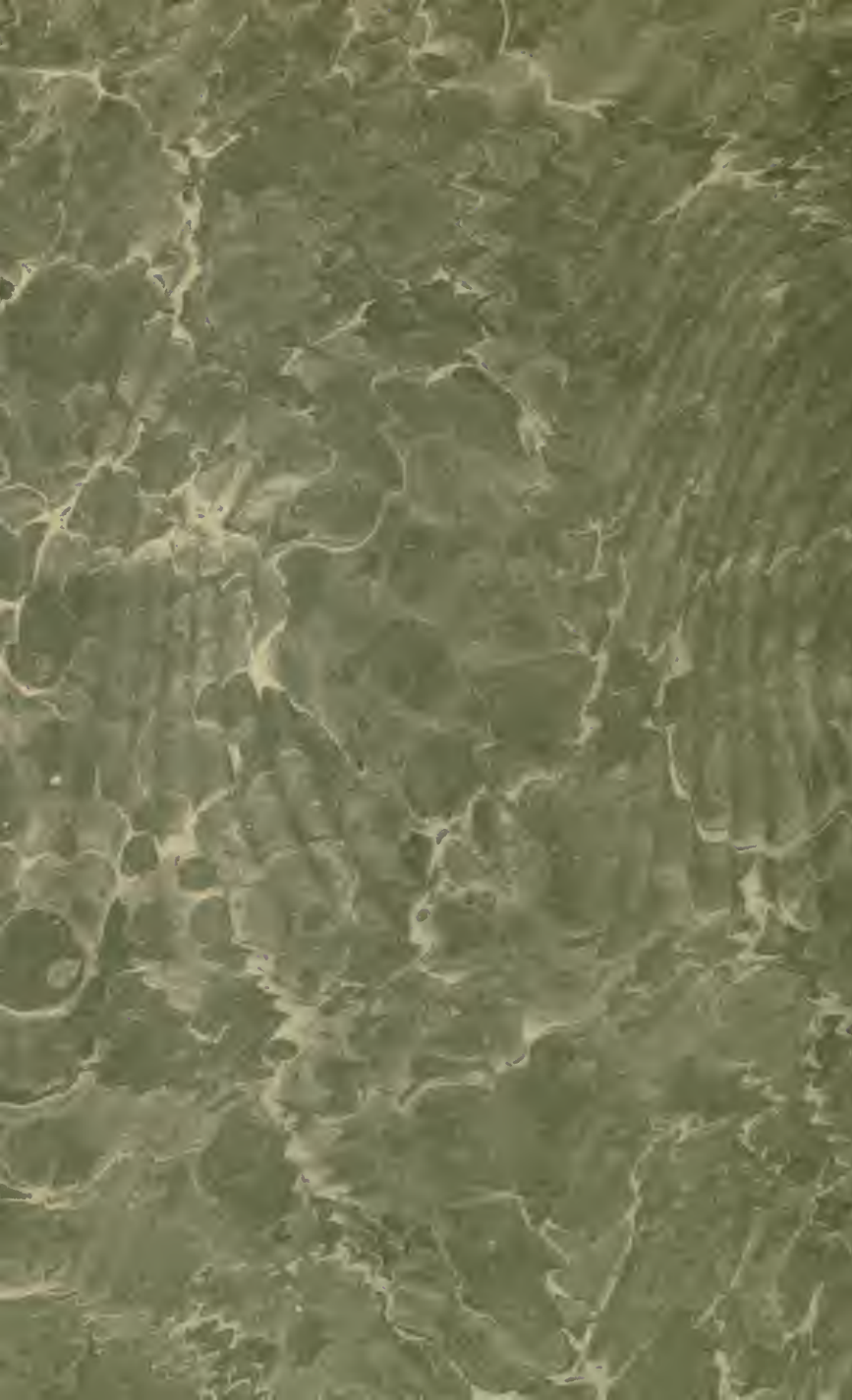
The next morning we took our places in the P.L.M. *Rapide* and went whirling away over the pleasant lands of Southern France, through Lyons, Dijon, and Maçon, to Paris and thence to Calais in trains that were well worthy to run over the same metals as the "South Western Limited," and the "Overland."

Then came the usual bucketing across the Channel, and after that a crawl of seventy-six miles in two hours and thirty-five minutes in a dirty, rickety, first-class compartment on one of the alleged expresses of the Amalgamated Crawlers. The splendid corridor train of the Nörd had covered the hundred and eighty-five miles between Paris and Calais inside four hours ; but that was in France. Still the "boat-express" did at last manage to struggle into Charing Cross, and I found myself standing in the familiar Strand once more. The thirty-thousand-mile trip was finished, and Prisonland with all its new experiences and varied memories was itself now only a memory.

THE END.



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